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Motes in the Sunbeam and Other Parables from Nature

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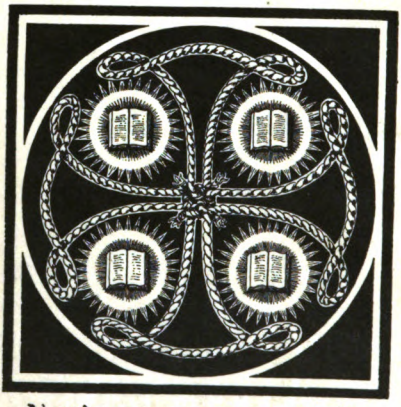

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JAMES HARDY ROPES

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Alice Louise

Feb. 26. 1876.

from Aunt Mary C.

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DAILY BREAD.

Motes in the Sunbeam.

FRONTISPIECE.

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PARABLES FROM NATURE.

BY

MRS. ALFRED GATTY,

AUTHOR OF "WORDS OF FLOWERS," "FLOWERS IN THEIR HOMES," ETC.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS
No. 530 BROADWAY.
1874.

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T BREAD.

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AND OTHER

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I.

Motes in the Sunbeam.

IT was a bright, sunshiny day at Christmas-tide, when, once upon a time, two little girls were sitting on their mamma's sick-bed. One was a very little thing, who could only just talk, and she was leaning her curly head against the bed-post. The other, some two or three years older, was sitting on a pillow near her mother. The children were not talking much, for there was a new baby in the house, and everybody was very quiet, though very happy; and these two little sisters of the new-comer had only been admitted to see poor mamma, on condition that they would be very good and make no noise.

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But the active spirits of young animals cannot be long kept under; and so it happened that a strong gleam of winter sunshine, entering into the room through a half-opened shutter, shot right across the middle of the bed, and attracted the eyes and attention of both the children; for up and down in this narrow strip of light danced innumerable sparkling motes. The elder child, the Kate of our story, had a little open box in her hand, and she stretched it out, up and down, into the beam, and whispered, in a half-giggle of delight, "I'll catch the stars." Her mamma looked on and smiled, for the merry Kate made the play very amusing to herself. She pretended to catch the shining motes in the empty box; and then put on a face of mock surprise and disappointment at finding nothing inside when she peeped to see. Moreover, she kept up a little talk all the time: "There's one:—oh, he's such a beauty!—I must have him!" and then she dashed the box once more into the streak of light.

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But this sport and the smiles on mamma's face soon became irresistible to the little Undine-child by the bed-post, and she said, very gently, "Give *me* some, too."

"Some 'what?' my little Undine?" asked mamma: "what are they?"

Undine glanced at her mother, and then at the motes, and then she said, "Stars;"—but there was a misgiving look on her face as she spoke.

"No, they're not stars,—are they, Mamma?" observed the wiser Kate: "they're nothing but dust;"—and the box danced about quicker than ever.

"They're not dust," pouted the offended little one: "they're stars!"

"Well then, here, you shall have a boxful," cried Kate, thrusting the box upon Undine's lap, and covering it over with her pinafore: "Take care of them—take care of them—or they'll all go out."

Very carefully and slowly did Undine uncover the box, and with a very grave and

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inquiring face did she examine it both inside and out, in search of the stars; and then, in one of those freaks of change so common to children, she burst into a gay laugh, tossed the box up like a ball, and cried out, "They're nothing but dust—nothing but nasty, dirty dust! There they go!"

And, "There they go!" echoed Kate; and forthwith the children commenced a jumping and noise which quickly brought the nurse to the room, and an order for the removal of the riotous little damsels.

"But, Mamma," inquired Kate, in a grave whisper, before she went away, "why does the dust look so like stars?"

"Because the sun sent his light upon it," answered mamma: "Sunshine is like love, Kate,—it makes everything shine with its own beauty. You and Undine," added she, kissing her little girl's fat cheek, "are stars in my eyes, because I see you in the sunshine of love."

"But we're not 'nothing but nasty, dirty

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dust' in reality," observed Kate, shaking her head very knowingly, as she led her little sister from the room.

Those of my young readers who have lived in the north of England, will remember the fine old Christmas hymn that is sung in that part of the country. They will remember the many happy snowy Christmas-eves on which they went to bed, delighted at the thought of hearing it in the night; and how a curious thrill of pleasure came over them when they really were roused from sleep by the solemn and beautiful sounds of—

> "Christians, awake! salute the happy morn
> Whereon the Saviour of mankind was born."

—sung by the village waits, usually the church singers of the place. As I think of these things myself, I almost hear the grand old melody; and can fancy some little urchin, more hardy than the rest of his companions, creeping out of his snug bed to peep behind the blind at the well-known old men and

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girls, all wrapped up in great coats and cloaks, to protect them from the stormy December night. I can fancy, too, how, after feeling very chilly as he stood at the window, he would go back to the warm bed, and say how cold the poor waits must be! and how, between whispering about the waits and listening to the music, those children would while away one of the happiest hours of merry Christmas; and then, after hearing the sounds revive and die away in other more distant parts of the village, would drop asleep as easily as tired labourers at night.

Well! you wonder what this Christmas hymn has to do with my story of Kate and Undine! Merely this,—that one of the verses begins thus :—

> "Oh may we keep and ponder in our mind,
> God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind."

And this is taken from a passage in Scripture, to which I want to call your attention,—namely that wherein it is said of the Virgin

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Mary, that she "kept and pondered in her heart" the wonderful things the shepherds had told her of our Saviour. Other people *talked* about them, and made a fuss about them, and then very likely forgot them; but Mary "*pondered them in her heart;*" a practice which has, alas! gone sadly too much out of fashion; for everybody now-a-days is so busy either learning or talking, that for "pondering things in the heart" there seems to be neither time nor inclination.

Nevertheless, *mothers* are still more apt to do it than anybody else. Indeed, they are constantly pondering in their minds the things that their children say, or the things that people say of them. Sometimes they may ponder foolishly, but I hope not often, especially if they ponder in their hearts, and not in their heads only.

Now the mother of Kate and Undine was a great ponderer; and as she had, especially just then, nothing else to do, you may be sure how she pondered over the pretty scene of

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her two little ones and the motes in the sun beam. And the dust *did* look very like stars, she confessed to herself, as she lay looking up at the light.

"But how wise," thought she, "the sober Kate felt at her own superior knowledge! how proud to recognize dust for dust, even under its most sunny aspect! And yet how often, before life is ended, may she not make Undine's mistake herself, and take even dust for stars, merely because the sun shines upon it!"

And here the poor mamma uttered a short prayer that she might be enabled to instil good principles into her children's minds, that so Kate, and Undine too, might know dust for dust whenever they saw it, let the outward world shine upon it never so brightly.

And then she looked up at the sunbeam, as it streamed across her sick-bed, till she thought it was like so many things, she felt her head becoming quite confused.

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It was like love, as she had said—yes; but it was like cheerfulness—like good-temper—like the Gospel charity: for do not the commonest things of life, and the dullest duties of life, shine, starlike, under their rays? Yes; but it was most of all like "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;" for that lightens up the dark career of earthly existence, and leads the soul upward along the bright path of its rays, till it reaches the everlasting home of light itself.

"Ay, ay," thought the mother, as she looked once more: "Motes in the sunbeam as we are—miserable dust and ashes in ourselves—the light streams down upon us and transfigures us: we follow the light upwards, and become the children of light ourselves."

Her head had indeed become confused amidst similes, and fancies, and half-waking dreams; but before she could think the matter over, clearly and distinctly, she had fallen fast asleep.

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II.

The Law of the Wood.

"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good."
Rom. xv. 2.

"EVER!"

What a word to be heard in a wood on an early summer morning, before the sun had quite struggled through the mists, and before the dew had left the flowers; and while all Nature was passing through the changes that separate night from day, adapting herself gently to the necessities of the hour.

"Never!"

What a word to come from a young creature, which knew very little more of what

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had gone before, than of what was coming after, and who could not, therefore, be qualified to pronounce a very positive judgment upon anything. But, somehow or other, it is always the young and inexperienced, who are most apt to be positive and self-willed in their opinions; and so, the young Spruce-fir, thinking neither of the lessons which Nature was teaching, nor of his own limited means of judging, stuck out his branches all around him in everybody's face, right and left, and said,—

"Never!"

It so startled a Squirrel, who was sitting in a neighbouring tree, pleasantly picking out the seeds of a fir-cone, that he dropped his treasured dainty to the ground; and springing from branch to branch, got up as high as he could,—and then, looking down remarked timidly to himself, "What can be the matter with the Spruce-firs?"

Nothing was the matter with the Spruce-firs, exactly; but the history of their excite-

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ment was as follows :—They, and a number of other trees, were growing together in a pretty wood. There were oaks, and elms, and beeches, and larches, and firs of many sorts; and here and there there was a silver-barked Birch. And there was one silver-barked Birch, in particular, who had been observing the Spruce-firs all that spring; noticing how fast they were growing, and what a stupid habit (as he thought) they had, of always getting into everybody's way, and never bending to accommodate the convenience of others.

He might have seen the same thing for some years before, if he had looked; but he was not naturally of an inquisitive disposition, and did not trouble himself with other people's affairs; so that it was only when the Spruce-fir next him had come so close that its branches fridged off little pieces of his delicate paper-like bark, when the wind was high, that his attention was attracted to the subject

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People usually become observant when their own comfort is interfered with, and this was the case here. However little the Birch might have cared for the Spruce-fir's behaviour generally, there was no doubt that it was very disagreeable to be scratched in the face; and this he keenly felt, and came to his own conclusions accordingly.

At first, indeed, he tried to sidle and get out of the Fir's way, being himself of a yielding, good-natured character, but the attempt was quite a hopeless one. He could not move on one side a hundredth part as fast as the fir branches grew; so that, do what he would, they came pushing up against him, and teased him all day.

It was quite natural, therefore, that the poor Birch should begin to look round him, and examine into the justice and propriety of such a proceeding on the part of the Spruce-firs; and the result was, that he considered their conduct objectionable in every way.

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"For," said he, (noticing that there was a little grove of them growing close together just there,) "if they all go on, shooting out their branches in that manner, how hot and stuffy they will get! Not a breath of air will be able to blow through them soon, and that will be very bad for their health; besides which, they are absolute pests to society, with their unaccommodating ways. I must really, for their own sakes, as well as my own, give them some good advice."

And accordingly, one morning—that very early summer morning before described,—the Birch, having had his silvery bark a little more scratched than usual, opened his mind to his friends.

"If you would but give way a little, and not stick out your branches in such a very stiff manner on all sides, I think you would find it a great deal more comfortable for yourselves, and it would certainly be more agreeable to your neighbours. Do try!"

"You are wonderfully ready in giving un

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asked advice!" remarked the young Spruce-fir next the Birch, in a very saucy manner. "We are quite comfortable as we are, I fancy; and as to *giving way*, as you call it, what, or whom are we called upon to give way to, I should like to know?"

"To me, and to all your neighbours," cried the Birch, a little heated by the dispute.

On which the Spruce-fir next the Birch cried, "Never!" in the most decided manner possible; and those beyond him cried "Never!" too; till at last all the Spruce-firs, with one accord, cried, "Never!" "Never!" "Never!" and half frightened the poor squirrel to death. Every hair on his beautiful tail trembled with fright, as he peeped down from the top of the tree, wondering what could be the matter with the Spruce-firs.

And certainly, there was one thing the matter with them, for they were very obstinate; and as nobody can be very obstinate without being very selfish, there was more the matter with them than they themselves

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suspected, for obstinacy and selfishness are very bad qualities to possess. But so ignorant were they of their real character, that they thought it quite a fine thing to answer the Birch-tree's mild suggestion in such a saucy manner. Indeed, they actually gave themselves credit for the display of a firm, independent spirit; and so, while they shouted "Never!" they held out their branches as stiffly as possible towards each other, till they crossed and recrossed, and plaited together. On which they remarked—

"What a beautiful pattern this makes! How neatly we fit in, one with the other! How pretty we shall look when we come out green all over! Surely the Wood-pigeons would have been quite glad to build their nests here if they had known. What a pity they did not, poor things! I hear them cooing in the Elm-tree yonder, at a very inconvenient height, and very much exposed."

"Don't trouble yourselves about us," cooed the Wood-pigeons from their nest in the

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Elm. "We are much happier where we are. We want more breeze and more leafy shade than you can give us, in your close, thick-growing branches."

"Every one to his taste," exclaimed the young Spruce-fir, a little nettled by the Wood-pigeons' cool remarks. "If you prefer wind and rain to shelter, you are certainly best where you are. But you must not talk about leafy shade, because every one knows that you can have nothing of it where you are, to what you will find here, when we come out green all over."

"But when will that be?" asked the Wood-pigeons, in a gentle voice. "Dear friends, do you not know that the spring is over, and the early summer has begun, and all the buds in the forest are turned to leaves? And you yourselves are green everywhere outside, not only with your evergreen hue, but with the young summer's shoots. I sadly fear, however, that it is not so in your inner bowers."

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"Perhaps, because we are evergreens, our sprouting may not go on so regularly as with the other trees," suggested one. But he felt very nervous at his foolish remark. It was welcomed, however, as conclusive, by his friends, who were delighted to catch at any explanation of a fact which had begun to puzzle them.

So they cried out, "Of course!" with the utmost assurance; and one of them added, "Our outer branches have been green and growing for some time, and doubtless we shall be green all over, soon!"

"Doubtless!" echoed every Spruce-fir in the neighbourhood, for they held fast by each other's opinions, and prided themselves on their family attachment.

"We cannot argue," cooed the Wood-pigeons, in return. "The days are too short, even for love; how can there ever be time for quarrelling?"

So things went on in the old way, and many weeks passed over; but still the inter-

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laced branches of the Spruce-firs were no greener than before. But beautiful little cones hung along the outermost ones; and, judging by its outside appearance, the grove of firs looked to be in a most flourishing state.

Alas! however, all within was brown and dry; and the brownness and dryness spread further and further, instead of diminishing; and no wonder, for the summer was a very sultry one, and the confined air in the Fir-grove became close and unhealthy; and after heavy rains, an ill-conditioned vapour rose up from the earth, and was never dispersed by the fresh breezes of heaven.

Nevertheless, the Spruce-firs remained obstinate as ever. They grew on in their old way, and tried hard to believe that all was right.

"What can it matter," argued they, "whether we are green or not, inside? We are blooming and well everywhere else, and these dry branches don't signify much, that I can see. Still, I do wonder what can be the

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reason of one part being more green than another."

"It is absurd for you to wonder about it," exclaimed the Birch, who became more irritated every day. "There is not a tree in the world that could thrive and prosper, if it persisted in growing as you do. But it is of no use talking! You must feel and know that you are in each other's way every time you move; and in everybody else's way too. In *mine*, most particularly."

"My dear friend," retorted the Spruce-fir, "your temper makes you most absurdly unjust. Why, we make a point of never interfering with each other, or with anybody else! Our rule is, to go our own way, and let everybody else do the same. Thus much we claim as a right."

"Thus much we claim as a right!" echoed the Spruce-fir grove.

"Oh, nonsense about a *right*," persisted the Birch. "Where is the good of having a right to make both yourself and your neigh

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bours miserable? If we each of us lived in a field by ourselves, it would all be very well. Every one might go his own way then undisturbed. But mutual accommodation is the law of the wood, or we should all be wretched together."

"My friend," rejoined the Spruce-fir, "you are one of the many who mistake weakness for amiability, and make a merit of a failing. We are of a different temper, I confess! We are, in the first place, *capable* of having ideas, and forming opinions of our own, which everybody is not; and, in the second place, the plans and habits we have laid down to ourselves, and which are not wrong in themselves, we are *courageous* enough to presist in, even to the death."

The Spruce-fir bristled all over with stiffness, as he refreshed himself by this remark.

"Even," inquired the Birch, in an ironical tone—"even at the sacrifice of your own comfort, and that of all around you?"

"You are suggesting an impossible absurd-

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ity," answered the vexed Spruce-fir, evasively. "What is neither wrong nor unreasonable in itself can do no harm to anybody, and I shall never condescend to truckle to other people's whims as to my line of conduct. But there are plenty who, to get credit for complaisance to their neighbours, would sacrifice their dearest principles without a scruple!"

"Come, come!" persisted the Birch; "let us descend from these heights. There are plenty of *other* people, my friend, who would fain shelter the most stupid obstinacy and the meanest selfishness, behind the mask of firmness of character or principle,—or what not. Now what principle, I should like to know, is involved in your persisting in your stiff, unaccommodating way of growing, except the principle of doing what you please at the expense of the feelings of other people?"

"Insolent!" cried the Spruce-fir; "we grow in the way which Nature dictates, and our right to do so must therefore be unquestionable. We possess, too a character of

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our own, and are not like those who can trim their behaviour into an unmeaning tameness, to curry favour with their neighbours."

"I ought to be silent," cried the Birch, "for I perceive my words are useless. And yet, I would like you to listen to me a little longer. Does the Beech-tree sacrifice her character, do you think, when she bends away her graceful branches to allow room for the friend at her side to flourish, too? Look! how magnificently she grows, stretching protectingly, as it were, among other trees; and yet, who so accommodating and yielding in their habits as she is?"

"It is her nature to be subservient, it is ours to be firm!" cried the Spruce-fir.

"It is her nature to throw out branches all round her, as it is that of every other tree," insisted the friendly Birch: "but she regulates the indulgence of her nature by the comfort and convenience of others."

"I scorn the example you would set me," cried the Spruce-fir; "it is that of the weak-

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est and most supple of forest trees. Nay, I absolutely disapprove of the tameness you prize so highly. Never, I hope, will you see us bending feebly about, and belying our character, even for the sake of flourishing in a wood!"

It was all in vain, evidently; so the Birch resolved to pursue the matter no further, but he muttered to himself—

"Well, you will see the result."

On which the Spruce-fir became curious, and listened for more. The Birch, however, was silent, and at last the Spruce-fir made a sort of answer in a haughty, indifferent tone.

"I do not know what you mean by the result."

"You will know, some day," muttered the Birch, very testily, (for the fir branches were fridging his bark, cruelly—the wind having risen—) "and even I shall be released from your annoyance, before long!"

"I will thank you to explain yourself in

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intelligible language," cried the Spruce-fir, getting uneasy.

"Oh! in plain words, then, if you prefer it," replied the Birch. "You are all of you dying."

"Never!" exclaimed the Spruce-fir; but he shook all over with fright, as he uttered it. And when the other Spruce-firs, according to custom, echoed the word, they were as tremulous as himself.

"Very well, we shall see," continued the Birch. "Every one is blind to his own defects, of course; and it is not pleasant to tell home truths to obstinate people. But there is not a bird that hops about the wood, who has not noticed that your branches are all turning into dry sticks; and before many years are over, there will be no more green outside than in. The flies and midges that swarm about in the close air around you, know it as well as we do. Ask the Squirrel what he thinks of your brown, crackly branches, which would break under his leaps.

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And as to the Wood-pigeons, they gave you a hint of your condition, long ago. But you are beyond a hint. Indeed, you are, I believe, beyond a cure."

They were, indeed; but a shudder passed through the Fir-grove at these words, and they tried very hard to disbelieve them. Nay, when the winter came, they did disbelieve them altogether; for, when all the trees were covered with snow, no one could tell a dead branch from a live one; and, when the snow fell off, they who had their evergreen outside, had an advantage over many of the trees by which they were surrounded. It was a time of silence, too, and quiet, for the leafless trees were in a half-asleep state, and had no humour to talk. The evergreens were the only ones who, now and then, had spirit enough to keep up a little conversation.

At last, one day, the Spruce-firs decided to consult with a distant relation of their own, the Scotch-fir, on the subject. He formed

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one of a large grove of his own kind, that grew on an eminence in the wood. But they could only get at him through a messenger; and, when the Squirrel who was sent to inquire whether *he* ever gave way in his growth to accommodate others, came back with the answer that, "Needs must when there was no help!" the Spruce-firs voted their cousin a degraded being even in his own eyes, and scorned to follow an example so base.

Then they talked to each other of the ill-nature of the world, and tried to persuade themselves that the Birch had put the worst interpretation on their condition, merely to vex them; and told themselves, in conclusion, that they had nothing to fear. But their anxiety was great; and when another spring and summer succeeded to the winter, and all the other trees regained their leaves, and a general waking up of life took place, a serious alarm crept over the Spruce-fir grove; for, alas! the brownness and dryness had spread

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still further, and less and less of green was to be seen on the thickest branches.

Had they but listened to advice, even then, all might have been well. Even the little birds told them how troublesome it was to hop about among them. Even the squirrel said he felt stifled if he ran under them for a cone. But they had got into their heads that it was a fine thing to have an independent spirit, and not mind what anybody said; and they had got a notion that it was a right and justifiable thing to go your own way resolutely, provided you allowed other people to do the same. But, with all their philosophy, they forgot that abstract theories are only fit for solitary life, and can seldom be carried out strictly in a wood.

So they grew on, as before, and the Birch-tree ceased to talk, for either his silver peel had all come off, and he was hardened, or else he had taught himself to submit unmurmuringly to an evil he could not prevent. Certain it is, that no further argument took

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place, and the condition of the Spruce-firs attracted no further notice, till, one spring morning, several seasons later, the whole wood was startled by the arrival of its owner, a new master, who was come to pay his first visit among its glades.

The occasional sound of an axe-stroke and a good deal of talking were heard from time to time, for the owner was attended by his woodman: and at last he reached the Spruce-fir grove.

Alas! and what an exclamation he gave at the sight, as well he might; for nearly every one of the trees had fallen a victim to his selfish mistake, and had gradually died away. Erect they stood, it is true, as before, but dried, withered, perished monuments of an obstinate delusion. The owner and the woodman talked together for a time, and remarked to each other that half those trees ought to have been taken away years ago: that they were never fit to live in a cluster together; for, from their awkward way of

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growing, they were half of them sure to die.

But of all the Grove there was but one who had life enough to hear these words; and to him the experience came too late. All his old friends were in due time cut down before his eyes; and he, who by an accident stood slightly apart, and had not perished with the rest, was only reserved in the hope that he might partially recover for the convenience of a Christmas-tree.

It was a sad, solitary summer he passed, though the fresh air blew freely round him now, and he rallied and grew, as well as felt invigorated by its sweet, refreshing breath; and though the little birds sung on his branches, and chattered of happiness and love: for those who had thought with him and lived with him, were gone, and their places knew them no more.

Ah, certainly there had been a mistake somewhere, but it did not perhaps signify much now, to ascertain where; and no re-

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proaches or ridicule were cast upon him by his neighbours; no, not even by the freed and happy silver-barked Birch; for a gentler spirit than that of rejoicing in other people's misfortunes, prevailed in the pretty wood.

So that it was not till Christmas came, and his doom was for ever sealed, that the Spruce-fir thoroughly understood the moral of his fate.

But then, when the crowds of children were collected in the brightly-lighted hall, where he stood covered with treasures and beauty, and when they all rushed forward, tumbling one over another, in their struggles to reach his branches; each one going his own way, regardless of his neighbour's wishes or comfort; and when the parents held back the quarrelsome rogues, bidding them one give place to another,—"in honour preferring one another,"—considering public comfort, rather than individual gratification; then, indeed, a light seemed to be thrown on the puzzling subject of the object and rules of social life; and he repeated to himself

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the words of the silver-barked Birch, exclaiming,—

"Mutual accommodation is certainly the law of the wood, or its inhabitants would all be wretched together."

It was his last idea.

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III.

Active and Passive.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."—MILTON.

"RESTLESS life! restless life!" moaned the Weathercock on the church tower by the sea, as he felt himself swayed suddenly round by the wind, and creaked with dismay; "restless, toiling life, and everybody complaining of one all the time. *There's that tiresome weathercock pointing east*, cried the old woman, as she hobbled up the churchyard path to the porch, last Sunday; *now I know why I have got all my rheumatic pains back again*. Then, in a day

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or two, came the farmer by on his pony, and drew up outside the wall to have a word with the grave-digger. *A bad look out, Tomkins*, said he, *if that rascally old weathercock is to be trusted; the wind's got into the wrong quarter again, and we shall have more rain.* Was it my fault if he did find out through me that the wind was in what he called *the wrong quarter?* Besides, the wind always is in somebody's wrong quarter, I verily believe! But am *I* to blame? Did I choose my lot? No, no! Nobody need suppose I should go swinging backwards and forwards, and round and round, all my life, telling people what they don't want to know, if I had my choice about the matter. Ah! how much rather would I lead the quiet, peaceful existence of my old friend the Dial, down below yonder, on his pedestal. That *is* a life indeed!"

"How he is chattering away up above there," remarked the Dial from below; "he almost makes me smile, though not a ray of

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sunshine has fallen on me through the live-long day, alas! I often wonder what he finds to talk about. But his active life gives him subjects enough, no doubt. Ah! what would I not give to be like him! But, all is so different with me, alas! I thought I heard my own name, too, just now. I will ask. Halloo! up above there. Did you call, my sprightly friend? Is there anything fresh astir? Tell me if there is. I get so weary of the dark and useless hours; so common now, alas! What have you been talking about?"

"Nothing profitable this time, good neighbour," replied the Weathercock; "for, in truth, you have caught me grumbling."

"Grumbling.....? Grumbling, *you?*"

"Yes, grumbling, I! Why not?

"But grumbling in the midst of an existence so gay, so active, so bright!" pursued the Dial; "it seems impossible."

"Gay, active, bright! a pretty description enough; but what a mockery of the truth it

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covers! Look at me, swinging loosely to every peevish blast that flits across the sky. Turned here, turned there, turned everywhere. The sport of every passing gust. Never a moment's rest, but when the uncertain breezes choose to seek it for themselves. Gay, active, bright existence, indeed! Restless, toiling life, I call it, and all to serve a thankless world, by whom my very usefulness is abused. But you, my ancient friend, you, in the calm enjoyment of undisturbed repose, steady and unmoved amidst the utmost violence of storms, how little can you appreciate the sense of weariness I feel! A poor judge of my troubled lot are you in your paradise of rest!"

"My paradise of rest, do you call it?" exclaimed the Dial; "an ingenious title, truly, to express what those who know it practically feel to be little short of a stagnation of existence. Dull, purposeless, unprofitable, at the mercy of the clouds and shades of night; I can never fulfil my end but by their sufferance, and in the seasons, rare enough at best,

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when their meddling interference is withdrawn. And even when the sun and hour do smile upon me, and I carry out my vocation, how seldom does any one come near me to learn the lessons I could teach. I weary of the night; I weary of the clouds; I weary of the footsteps that pass me by. Would that I could rise, even for a few brief hours, to the energy and meaning of a life like yours!"

"This is a strange fatality, indeed!" creaked the Weathercock, in reply, "that you, in your untroubled calm, should yearn after the restlessness I sicken of. That I, in what you call my gay and active existence, should long for the quiet you detest!"

"You long for it because you are ignorant of its nature and practical reality," groaned the Dial.

"Nay, but those are the very words I would apply to you, my ancient friend. The blindest ignorance of its workings can alone account for your coveting a position such as mine."

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"If that be so, then every position is wrong," was the murmured remark in answer; but it never reached the sky, for at that moment the mournful tolling of a bell in the old church-tower announced that a funeral was approaching, and in its vibrations the feebler sound was lost.

And as those vibrations gathered in the air, they grouped themselves into a solemn dirge, which seemed as if it rose in contradiction to what had just been said.

For it gave out to the mourners who were following the corpse to its last earthly resting-place, that every lot was good, and blessed to some particular end.

For the lots of all (it said) were appointed, and all that was appointed was good.

Little, little did it matter, therefore, (it said,) whether the lot of him who came to his last resting-place had been a busy or a quiet one; a high or a low one; one of labour or of endurance. If that which was appointed to be done had been well done, all was well.

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It gave out, too, that every time and season was good, and blessed to some particular purpose; that the time to die was as good as the time to be born, whether it came to the child who had done but little, or to the man who had done much.

For the times and seasons (it said) were appointed, and all that was appointed was good.

Little, little did it matter, therefore, (it said,) whether the time of life had been a long one or a short one; if that which was appointed to be used had been rightly used, all was right.

Echoing and reëchoing in the air came these sounds out of the old bell-tower, bidding the mourners not to mourn, for both the lots and the times of all things were appointed, and all that was appointed, was good.

The mourners wept on, however, in spite of the dirge of the bell; and perhaps it was best that they did so, for where are the outpourings of penitence so likely to be sincere,

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or the resolutions of amendment so likely to be earnest, as over the graves of those we love?

So the mourners wept; the corpse was interred; the clergyman departed, and the crowd dispersed; and then there was quiet in the churchyard again, for a time.

Uninterrupted quiet, except when the wandering gusts drove the Weathercock hither and thither, causing him to give out a dismal squeak as he turned.

But at last there was a footstep in the old churchyard again, a step that paced up and down along the paved path; now westward towards the sea, now eastward towards the Lych-gate at the entrance.

It was a weather-beaten old fisherman, once a sailor, who occasionally made of that place a forecastle walk for exercise and pondering thoughts, since the time when age and growing infirmities had disabled him from following regularly the more toilsome

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parts of a fisherman's business, which were now carried on by his two grown-up sons.

He could do a stroke of work now and then, it is true, but the nows and thens came but seldom, and he had many leisure hours on his hands in which to think of the past, and look forward to the future.

And what a place was that churchyard for awakening such thoughts! There, as he walked up and down, his own wife's grave was not many yards distant from his feet; and yet, from amidst these relics and bitter evidences of finite mortality, he could look out upon that everlasting sea which seems always to stretch away into the infinite we all believe in.

Perhaps, in his own way, the sailor had often felt this, although he might not have been able to give any account of his sensations.

Up and down the path he paced, lingering always a little at the western point ere he turned and with his telescope tucked under

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his arm ready for use, he stood for a second or two looking seaward, in case a strange sail should have come in sight.

The sexton, who had come up to the churchyard again to finish the shaping of the new grave, nodded to him as he passed, and the sailor nodded in return; but neither of them spoke, for the sailor's habits were too well known to excite attention, and the sexton had his work to complete.

But presently, when half-way to the Lych-gate, the sailor stopped suddenly short, turned round hastily, and faced the sea, steadying the cap on his head against the gale which was now blowing directly on his face—looked up to the sky—looked all around—looked at the Weathercock, and then stood, as if irresolute, for several seconds.

At last, stepping over the gravestones, he went up to the stone pedestal, on the top of which the Dial lay, waiting for the gleams of sunshine which had on that day fallen rarely and irregularly upon it.

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"If the clouds would but break away for a minute," mused the old man to himself.

And soon after, they did so, for they had begun to drive very swiftly over the heavens, and the sunlight, streaming for a few seconds on the dial-plate, revealed the shadow of the gnomon cast upon the place of three o'clock.

The sailor lingered by the Dial for several minutes after he had ascertained the hour, examining the figures, inscriptions, and dates. A motto on a little brass plate was let into the pedestal below: "Watch, for ye know not the hour." There was some difficulty in reading it, it was so blotched and tarnished with age and long neglect. Indeed, few people knew there was an inscription there, at all; but the old sailor had been looking very closely, and so found it out, and then he spelt it all through, word by word.

It was to be hoped that the engraver (one Thomas Trueman) who claimed to have had this warning put up for the benefit of others, had attended to it himself, for he had long

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ago—ay! nearly a hundred years ago—gone to his last account. The appointed hour had come for him, whether he had watched for it or not.

Perhaps some such thoughts crossed the sailor's mind, for certainly, after reading the sentence, he fell into a reverie. Not a long one, however, for it was interrupted by the voice of the sexton, who, with his mattock over his shoulder, was passing back on his way home, and called out to the sailor to bid him good evening.

"Good night, Mr. Bowman," said he; "we've rather a sudden change in the wind, haven't we?"

"Ay, ay," answered Bowman, by no means displeased at this deference to his opinion; and he stepped back again to the path, and joined his village friend.

"It *is* a sudden change, as you say, and an awkward one, too, for the wind came round at three o'clock, just at the turn of tide; and it's a chance but what it will keep this

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way for hours to come ; and a gale all night's an ugly thing, Tomkins, when it blows a-shore."

I hope you may be mistaken, Mr. Bowman," rejoined the sexton ; "but I suppose that's not likely. However, they say it's an ill wind that blows nobody good, so I suppose *I* shall come in for something at last," and here the sexton laughed.

"At your age, strong and hearty," observed the sailor, eyeing the sexton somewhat contemptuously, "you can't have much to wish for, I should think."

"Strong and hearty's a very good thing in its way, Mr. Bowman, I'll not deny ; but rest's a very good thing, too, and I wouldn't object to one of your idle afternoons, now and then, walking up and down the pavement, looking which way the wind blows. That's a bit of real comfort to my thinking."

"We don't know much of each other's real comforts, I suspect," observed the sailor, abstractedly ; and then he added—

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"You'll soon be cured of wishing for idle afternoons when they're forced upon you, Tomkins. But you don't know what you're talking about. Wait till you're old, and then you'll find it's I that might be excused for envying you, and not you me."

"That's amazing, Mr. Bowman, and I can't see it," persisted Tomkins, turning round to depart. "In my opinion you've the best of it; but anyhow, we're both of us oddly fixed, for we're neither of us pleased."

With a friendly good-night, but no further remark, the two men parted, and the churchyard was emptied of its living guests.

When the sailor sat down with his sons an hour or two afterwards to their evening meal, said he, "We must keep a sharp look-out, lads, to-night; the wind came round at three with the turn of the tide, and it blows dead ashore. I've been up to the Captain's at the Hall, and borrowed the use of his big boat in case it's wanted, for unless the gale goes down with the next tide,—which it won't, I

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think,—we might have some awkward work. Anyhow, boys, we'll watch."

* * * * * *

"Just what I said," muttered the Dial, as the sound of the last footsteps died on the churchyard path. "Just what I said! Everything's wrong, because everybody's dissatisfied. I knew it was so. We're right in grumbling; that's the only thing we're right in. At least, I'm sure *I'm* right in grumbling. I'm not so certain about my neighbour on the tower above. Halloo! my sprightly friend, do you hear? Did you notice? Isn't it just as I said? Everything's wrong to everybody."

The strong west wind continued to sweep through the churchyard, and bore these observations away; but the Weathercock meanwhile was making his own remarks to himself.

"There, now! There's the old story over again, only now it's the west wind that's wrong instead of the east! I wish anybody would tell me which is the *right* wind! But

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this, of course, is an ill wind, and an ugly gale, and they're afraid it will blow all night, (I wonder why it shouldn't, it blows very steadily and well, as *I* think,) and then they shake their heads at each other, and look up at me and frown. What's the use of frowning? They never saw me go better, in their lives. It's a fine firm wind as ever blew, though it does take one's breath rather fast, I own. If it did not make quite so much howling noise I should have had a word or two about it with my old comrade below, who sits as steady as a rock through it all, I've no doubt. There *is* one thing I am not quite easy about, myself . . . In case this west wind should blow a little, nay, in short, a great deal harder, even, than now, I wonder whether there would be any danger of my being blown down? I'm not very fond of my present quarters, it's true, but a change is sometimes a doubtful kind of thing, unless you can choose what it shall be. I wonder, too, whether people would be glad if I was

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gone; or whether, after all, I mightn't be rather missed? And I wonder, too—"

But it began to blow too hard for wondering, or talking, or doing anything but silently holding fast, for the gale was rising rapidly; so rapidly, that before midnight a hurricane was driving over land and ocean, and in its continued roaring, mingled as it was with the raging of a tempest-tossed sea, every other voice and sound was lost.

Tracts of white foam, lying like snow-fields on the water, followed the breakers as they fell down upon the shore with a crash of thunder, and were visible even through the gloom of night.

Hour after hour the uproar continued, and hour after hour the church clock struck, and no one heard. Due west pointed the Weathercock, varying scarcely a point. Firm and composed lay the Dial on his pedestal, and the old church on her foundations, mocking the tumult of the elements by their dead, immovable calm.

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In the village on the top of the cliff many were awakened by the noise; and one or two, as they lay listening in their beds, forgot for a time their own petty troubles and trifling cares, and uttered wishes and prayers that no vessels might be driven near that rock-bound shore on that night of storm!

Vain wishes! vain prayers! As they turned again to their pillows to sleep, with their children around them, housed in security and peace, the blue lights of distress were sent up by trembling hands into the vault of heaven, and agonized hearts wondered whether human eye would see them, or human hand could aid.

And it might easily have happened that, in that terrible night, no eye had caught sight of the signals, or caught sight of them too late to be of use, or that those who had seen had been indifferent, or unable to help.

But it was not so, or the Weathercock would have pointed, and the Dial have

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shown the hour, and the sailor looked at both in vain.

And this was not the case!

People were aroused from their pillowed slumbers the next morning to hear that a vessel, with a passenger crew on board of her, was driving on the rocks. From cottage casements, and from the drawing-room windows of houses on the top of the cliff, the fatal sight was seen; for, the dismasted ship, rolling helplessly on the waters, drifted gradually in front of the village, looking black as if with the shadow of death.

Delicate women saw it, who, all unaccustomed to such sights, and shuddering at their own helplessness, could only sink on their knees and ask if there was no mercy with the Most High. Men saw it whom age or sickness had made weak as children, but who had once been brave and strong; and their hearts burned within them as they turned away, and sickened at the spectacle of misery they could not even try to avert. Children

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saw it who, mixing in the village crowd that by degrees gathered on the cliff, never ceased the vain prattling inquiry of why some good people did not go to help the poor people who were drowning in the ship?

"Young 'un, you talk!" growled one old fellow, who was eyeing the spectacle somewhat coolly through a telescope; "and it's *for* such as you to talk; but who's to get off a boat over such a surf as yon? Little use there'd be in flinging away more lives to save those that's as good as gone already."

"How you go on, Jonas!" cried a woman from the crowd. "Here's a lady has fainted through you're saying that; and what do you know about it? While there's life there's hope. My husband went down to the shore hours and hours ago, before it was light."

"With coffins, I suppose," shouted some one; and the jest went round, for the woman who had spoken was the sexton's wife. But many a voice cried "shame," as Mrs. Tom

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kins turned away to lend her aid in carrying the fainting lady to her home.

It was strange how time wore on, and no change for better or worse seemed to take place in the condition of the unhappy vessel, so far as those on land could judge of her. But she was at least a mile from shore; and even with a glass it was impossible to detect clearly the movements and state of her crew.

It was evident at one time that she had ceased to drift, and had become stationary, and all sorts of conjectures were afloat as to the cause; the most popular and dreadful of which, being, that she was gradually filling with water, and must go down.

This was the reason (old Jonas said) why part of the crew had got into the boat that was being towed along behind by means of a rope, so that, when every other hope was over, the rest of the men might join them, and make a last desperate effort to escape the fate of the sinking vessel.

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But still time wore on, and no change took place, nor did the vessel appear to get lower in the water, although at times the breakers rolled over her broken decks, and cries of "It's all over! There she goes!" broke from the crowd. The man at the wheel seemed still to maintain his post; those in the boat behind still kept their places, and the few visible about the ship were busied, but no one could say how.

At last somebody shouted that they were raising a jury-mast, though whether as a signal to some vessel within sight of them, or for their own use, remained doubtful, for a time; but by and by a small sail became visible, and soon after, it was observed that the vessel had resumed her course, and that she was no longer drifting but steering! It was clear, therefore, that she had been anchored previously, that the crew had not given up hope, and that they were now trying to weather the rocky bay, and get into the nearest harbour.

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Old Jonas turned away and lent his glass to others. The vessel was not filling with water, it was true, but could such a battered hulk, rolling as it did, ever live through the "race" at the extremity of the bay? He doubted it for his part—but he was disposed to doubt!

Others were more hopeful, and many a "Thank God for His goodness" relieved the anxious breasts of those who had hitherto looked on in trembling suspense. The villagers were gradually dispersing to their different occupations, when a couple of boys who had gone down by the cliffs to the shore, came running breathless back with the news that the old sailor's (Mr. Bowman's) cottage, the only one near the shore, was shut up, the key gone, and nobody there. This new surprise was heartily welcome, coming as it did to enliven the natural reäction of dulness that follows the cessation of great excitement; and the good wives of the village, with their aprons over their heads, huddled

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together, more full of wonder and conjecture over the disappearance of the Bowmans, than over the fate of the still peril-surrounded ship. It was then discovered, but quite by an accident, that some one else had disappeared—no other than Tomkins, the sexton. A neighbour, on her road home, accidentally dropping in at Mr. Tomkins's door to ask after the lady that had fainted, found the good woman sitting over the fire, rocking to and fro, and crying her heart out.

"Go away, woman!" cried she to her neighbour, as the door opened. "Get away wi' ye! I want none of ye! I want none of your talking! I'll not listen to any of ye till I know whether the ship's gone down or not!"

"The woman's beside herself!" cried the neighbour. "Why, you don't know what you are saying, surely. The ship is'nt likely to go down, now! There is a mast and a sail up, woman!

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"Ay, ay, but the 'race!'" cried Mrs. Tomkins, rocking to and fro in despair.

"The 'race' will not hurt it, there's a many says. It was only old Jonas that shook his head over that. Eh, woman, but you've lost your head with watching them. Where's your good man?"

Mrs. Tomkins almost shrieked, "*There!* he's *there—with them!* I saw him through Jonas's glass."

The neighbour was thunderstruck. Here was news indeed. But she pressed the matter no further, thinking in truth that Mrs. Tomkins's head was unsettled; and so, after soothing her a bit in the best fashion she could, she left her to talk the matter over in the village.

Mrs. Tomkins was not unsettled in her head at all. She had been one of those who had had a peep through Jonas's glass, and, to her horror, had detected, by some peculiarity of dress, the form of her husband sitting in the boat behind the vessel. The

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terror and astonishment that seized her rendered her mute, and she had retired to her own cottage to think it out by herself—what it could mean, and how it could have happened—but she had caught Jonas's remark about the "race," and on reaching her own fireside all thoughts merged in the one terrible idea that her husband might go down with the devoted ship.

The report of Mrs. Tomkins's hallucination soon spread, and there is no saying to what a pitch of mysterious belief in some supernatural visitation it might not have led, had not the arrival of Bowman's daughter in the village, and the account she gave, explained the whole affair.

Bowman and his sons had not gone regularly to bed at all on the night previous, but, true to their intention, had kept watch in turn, walking up and down along the front of their cottage, which stood upon ground slightly raised above the shore. It was the old man himself who happened to be watch-

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ing when the first blue lights went up, and it was then considerably past midnight.

"What a mercy!" was his first exclamation, after hurrying to the cottage, and bidding his sons follow him to the Hall; "what a mercy!" and he threw up his right arm with a clenched fist into the air, his whole frame knit up by strong emotion. The boys, not knowing what he meant, had only stared at him in surprise for a moment, for there was no time for talking. But the mind of the old man had, with the first sight of the blue lights, gone back to his churchyard lounge, to his observations on the weather, to the startling inscription, and to his determination to watch and provide. It had gone forward, too, as well as backward. Forward, with the elastic determination and hope, which comes like inspiration to a good cause; and for him, by anticipation, the daring deed had been done, and the perishing crew rescued. "—What a mercy!"—the exclamation comprehended past, present and future.

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As by the position of the signals of distress Bowman judged it would be best to put off the boat from the place where it usually lay, he locked up his cottage (for the girl refused to be left there alone) taking the key with him, and proceeded at once to the Hall; but recollecting that his friend, the sexton, had made an urgent request to be called up, should any disaster occur, one of the lads ran up the cliff to the village, to give notice of what they were about

But before he was half-way there, he met poor Tomkins himself, who, rendered restless and uneasy by Bowman's fears and the terrible weather, had come out to inquire how matters were going on. Thus, therefore, he joined their expedition at once, while his wife remained as ignorant of his movements as the rest of the village.

The Captain, a fine old sailor, round the evening of whose days the glories of Trafalgar shed an undying halo, had made it clearly understood, when applied to, that, in

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case of the boat being wanted, his own assistance, also, might be depended upon,—and he was true to his word; so that as soon as the dawn had broken, five men were to be seen on the beach under the Hall, up to their waists almost in water, struggling with the foaming breakers, and pushing off, with an energy which nothing but the most desperate resolution could have given them, a boat from the shore. Few words were spoken; the one gave orders, and the rest obeyed—promptly, implicitly, and willingly, as if they had worked for years in company; and thus, life and death at stake, they rowed over the waste of waters with mute courage, and a hope which never for an instant blinded them to the knowledge of the peril they incurred.

And thus it was that ere the full daylight had revealed to the villagers the disaster at sea, and even while they were shuddering for the fate of the supposed doomed vessel, help and comfort had reached the des-

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pairing hearts of the bewildered men on board.

There were plenty of people afterwards to say that anybody might have known—if they had only thought about it—that that man who was lashed to the wheel, and who had never changed his position for an instant, could have been nobody but the grand old Captain who had been so long in the wars!

There were plenty also to say that Bowman, old as he was, was constantly on the lookout, and was sure to be the first to foresee a disaster, and suggest what ought to be done, even when he could not do it himself; and didn't everybody know, too, that Tomkins was always foremost to have a hand in a job, whatever it might be.

The vessel cleared the "race," and got safe to the next harbour, and half the village went, with Bowman's daughter and Mrs. Tomkins (now weeping as hard for joy as she had before done for terror), to meet them as they landed.

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What a talking there was! and what bowing to the Captain, who, dripping wet and cold, had nevertheless a joke for everybody, and even made Mrs. Tomkins smile, by saying her husband had come with them on the look-out for a job, but happily his professional services had not been required, though he had done his duty otherwise like a man.

But the wet fellow-labourers had to be dried and taken care of, and the half-exhausted crew had to be attended to and comforted; and the time for chatting comfortably over the events of that night did not come, till people's minds and spirits had cooled down from the first excitement.

* * * * * *

The weather cleared up wonderfully after that terrible storm had passed over, and the following Sunday shone out over village and sea with all the brilliancy of spring.

It was just as they were issuing from church after morning service, that the Captain observed Bowman standing by the porch, as if

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waiting till the crowd had passed. He looked far more upright than usual. and had more of a smile upon his face than was commonly seen there. The Captain beckoned to him to come and speak, and Bowman obeyed.

"This has made a young man of you, Bowman," was the Captain's observation, and he smiled.

"It has comforted me, Sir, I'll not deny,' was Bowman's answer.

"I hope it will *teach* as well as comfort you," continued the Captain, with a half good-natured, half stern manner. "You've been very fond of talking of age and infirmity, and 'cumbering the ground,' and all that sort of thing. But what it *means* is, quarrelling with your lot. We may not always know what we're wanted for, nor is it for us to inquire, but nobody is useless as long as he is permitted to live. You can't have a shipwreck every day to prove it, Bowman, but this shipwreck ought to teach you the lesson for the rest of your life."

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"I hope it will, Sir," cried Bowman.

"Not that you've so much credit in that matter, after all, as I thought," observed the Captain, with a sly smile. "By your own account, if it hadn't been for these comrades of yours in the churchyard here," and as he spoke the Captain pointed with his stick to the Dial and Weathercock, "you might have gone to bed and snored composedly all the night through, without thinking of whether the storm would last, or what it would do."

Bowman touched his hat in compliment to the joke, recollecting with a sort of confusion that, as they were bringing the vessel into port, he had told the Captain the whole story of his noticing the change of wind at the particular hour of three, harping nervously and minutely on the importance of each link in the little chain of events, and dwelling much on the half-effaced inscription, the words of which had never left his mind from the moment when he got into the Captain's boat to that when they reached the shore in safety.

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Scarcely knowing how to reply, Bowman began again—

"Well, your honour, it's really true, for if it hadn't been that—"

"I know, I know," interrupted the Captain, laughing. "And now let us see your friends. I must have a peep at the inscription myself."

The old sailor led the way over the grassy graves to the Dial, and pointed out to his companion the almost illegible words.

There was a silence of several minutes, after the Captain had bent his head to read; and when he raised it again his look was very grave. Except for the mercy that had spared their lives in so great a risk, *the hour* might have been over for them.

"Bowman," cried the Captain at length, in his old good-natured way, "these comrades of yours shall not go unrewarded any more than yourself. Before another week is over you must see that this plate is cleaned and burnished, so that all the parish may read the inscription; and as to the Weathercock, I

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must have him as bright as gilding can make him before another Sunday. Come, here's work for you for the week, and the seeing that this is done will leave you no time for grumbling, eh, old fellow?"

Bowman bowed his lowest bow. It fell in with all his feelings to superintend such an improvement as this.

"And while you're looking after them, don't forget the lesson they teach," continued the Captain.

Bowman bowed again, and was attentive.

"I mean that everything, as well as everybody, is useful in its appointed place, at the appointed time. But neither we nor they can choose or foresee the time."

On the following Sunday, the sun himself scarcely exceeded in brilliancy the flashing Weathercock, which hovered gently between point and point on the old church-tower by the sea, as if to exhibit his splendour to the world. Not a creak did he make as he moved, for all grumbling was over, and he

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was suspended to a nicety on his well-oiled pole. Below, and freshly brightened up and cleaned, the Dial basked in the sunlight, telling one by one the fleeting hours, while the motto underneath it spoke its warning, in letters illuminated as if with fire. Many a villager hung about the once-neglected plate, and took to heart those words of divine wisdom,

"Watch, for ye know not the hour;"

and many an eye glanced up to the monitor of storms and weather, and echoed the "What a mercy!" of old Bowman, the sailor.

* * * * * *

"Are you silent, my sprightly comrade?" inquired the Dial from below, of his shining friend above.

"Only a little confused and overpowered, at first," was the answer of the Weather-cock. "My responsibility is great, you know. I have a great deal to do, and all the world is observing me just now."

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"That's true, certainly," continued the Dial. "Things are coming round in a singular manner. Everything's right, after all; but under such a cloud as we were a short time ago, it was not very easy to find it out."

"Undoubtedly not, and a more excusable mistake than ours could not well be imagined. People, with fifty times our advantages, are constantly falling into the same errors."

"Which is *such* a comfort," pursued the Dial, smiling, as he glowed in the sunbeams. "However," added he, "that's a good idea of the old gentleman that was here just now, and I shall try and remember it for future occasions, for it really appears to be true. 'Everything is useful in its place at the appointed time.' That was it, wasn't it?"

"Exactly. And, conscious as I feel just now of my own responsibility, I could almost add, (in confidence to you, of course, my ancient friend,) that I have a kind of sensation that everything is useful in its place.

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always, and at all times, though people mayn't always find it out."

"Just my own impression," was the Dial's last remark.

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IV.

Daily Bread.

"Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."—MATTHEW vi. 32.

"I WISH your cheerfulness were a little better timed, my friend," remarked a Tortoise, who for many years had inhabited the garden of a suburban villa, to a Robin Redbreast, who was trilling a merry note from a thorn-tree in the shrubbery. "What in the world are you singing about, at this time of year, when I, and everybody else of any sense, are trying to go to sleep, and forget ourselves?"

"I beg your pardon, I am sure," replied the Robin; "I did not know it would have disturbed you."

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"You must be gifted with very small powers of observation then, my friend," rejoined the Tortoise. "Here have I been grubbing my head under the leaves and sticks half the morning, to make myself a comfortable hole to take a nap in; and always, just as I am dropping off, you set up one of your senseless pipes."

"You are not over-troubled with politeness, good sir, I think," observed the Robin; "to call my performance by such an offensive name, and to find fault with me for want of observation, is the most unreasonable thing in the world. This is the first season I have lived in the garden, and all through the spring and summer you have never objected to my singing at all. How was I to know you would dislike it now?"

"Your own sense might have told you as much, without my giving myself the trouble of explanation," persisted the Tortoise. "Of course, it's natural enough and not disagreeable, to hear you little birds singing about

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the place, when there is something to sing about. It rather raises one's spirits than otherwise. For instance, when the weather becomes mild in the early year, and the plants begin to grow and get juicy, and it is about time for me to get up from my winter's sleep, I have no objection to be awakened by your voices. But now, in this miserable season, when the fruits and flowers are gone, and when even the leaves that are left are tough and dry, and there is not a dandelion that I care to eat; and when it gets colder and colder, and damper and damper every day, this affectation of merriment on your part is both ridiculous and hypocritical. It is impossible that you can feel happy yourself, and you have no business to pretend to it."

"But, begging your pardon once more, good sir, I do feel happy, whatever you may think to the contrary," answered the Robin.

"What, do you mean to say that you *like*

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cold, and damp, and bare trees, with scarcely a berry upon them?"

"I like warm, sunny days the best, perhaps," replied the Robin, "if I am obliged to think about it and make comparisons. But why should I do so? I am quite comfortable as it is. If there is not so much variety of food as there has been, there is, at any rate, enough for every day, and everybody knows that enough is as good as a feast. For my part, I don't see how I can help being contented."

"Contented! what a dull idea, to be just contented! I am contented myself, after a fashion; but you are trying to seem happy, and that is a very different sort of thing."

"Well, but happy; I am happy, too," insisted the Robin.

"That must be then because you know nothing of what is coming," suggested the Tortoise. "As yet, while the open weather lasts, you can pick up your favourite worms, and satisfy your appetite. But, when the

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ground has become so hard that the worms cannot come through, or your beak get at them, what will you do?"

"Are you sure that will ever happen?" inquired the Robin."

"Oh! certainly, in the course of the winter, at some time or another; and, indeed, it may happen any day now, which makes me anxious to be asleep and out of the way."

"Oh, well, if it happens now, I shall not mind a bit," cried the Robin; "there are plenty of berries left!"

"But supposing it should happen when all the berries are gone?" said the Tortoise, actually teased at not being able to frighten the Robin out of his singing propensities.

"Nay, but if it comes to *supposing*," exclaimed Robin, "I shall suppose it won't, and so I shall be happy still."

"But I say it *may* happen," shouted the Tortoise.

"And I ask, *will* it?" rejoined the Robin, in quite as determined a manner.

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"Which you know I cannot answer" retorted the Tortoise again. "Nobody knows exactly either about the weather or the berries, beforehand."

"Then let nobody trouble himself beforehand," persisted the Robin. "If there was anything to be done to prevent or provide, it would be different. But as it is, we have nothing to do but to be happy in the comfort each day brings." Here the Robin trilled out a few of his favourite notes, but the Tortoise soon interrupted him.

"Allow other people to be happy, then, as well as yourself, and cease squalling out of that tree. I could have forgiven you, had the branches been full of haws; but, as they are all withered or eaten, you can have no particular excuse for singing in that particular bush, rather than elsewhere; so let me request you at once to go."

"Of course I will do so," answered the Robin, politely. "It is the same thing to

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me exactly ; so I wish you a good morning, and, if you desire it, a refreshing sleep."

So saying, the Robin flew from the thorn-tree to another part of the grounds, where he could amuse himself without interruption ; and the Tortoise began to hustle under the leaves and rubbish again, with a view to taking his nap.

But, by and by, as the morning wore away, the frosty feeling and autumnal mists cleared off; and when the sun came out, which it did for three or four hours in the early afternoon, the day became really fine.

The old Tortoise did not fail to discover the fact ; and not having yet scratched himself a hole completely to his mind, he came out of the shrubbery and took a turn in the sunshine.

"This is quite a surprise, indeed," said he to himself. "It is very pleasant, but I am afraid it will not last. The more's the pity ; but, however, I shall not go to bed just yet."

With these words, he waddled slowly along

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to the kitchen garden, where he was in the habit of occasionally basking under the brick wall; and now, tilting himself up sideways against it, he passed an hour much to his satisfaction, in exposing his horny coat to the rays of the sun; a feat which he never dared to perform during the heats of summer.

Meanwhile, the poor little Robin continued his songs in a retired corner of the grounds, where no one objected to his cheerful notes. A tiny grove it was, with a grassy circle in the middle of it, where a pretty fountain played night and day.

During the pauses of his music and especially after the sun came out, he wondered much to himself about all the strange, uncomfortable things the Tortoise had said. Oh, to think of his having wanted to go to sleep and be out of the way, and now here was the sunshine making all the grove as warm as spring itself. If he had not been afraid the Tortoise might consider him in-

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trusive, he would have gone back and told him how warm and pleasant it was, but absolutely he durst not.

Still, he could not, on reflection, shut his eyes to the fact that there were no other songsters in the grove just now beside himself; and he wondered what was the reason. Time was, when the Nightingale was to be heard every night in this very spot; but, now he came to think of it, that beautiful pipe of his had ceased for months, and where the bird himself was, nobody seemed to know.

The Robin became thoughtful, and perhaps a little uneasy.

There was the Blackbird, too;—what was he about that he also was silent? Was it possible that all the world was really, as the Tortoise said, thinking it wise to go to sleep and be out of the way?

The Robin got almost alarmed;—so much so, that he flew about until he met with a Blackbird, whom he might question on the

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subject, and of him he made the inquiry, why he had left off singing?

The Blackbird glanced at him with astonishment.

"Who *does* sing in the dismal Autumn and Winter?" said he. "Really, I know of scarcely any who are bold and thoughtless enough to do so, except yourself. The Larks may, to be sure; but they lead such strange lives in the sky, or in seclusion, that they are no rule for any one else. Your own persevering chirruping is (in my humble judgment) so out of character with a season in which every wise creature must be apprehensive for the future, that I can only excuse it on the ground of an ignorance and levity which you have had no opportunity of correcting."

"It would be kinder to attribute it to a cheerful contentment with whatever comes to pass," cried the Robin, ruffling his feathers as he spoke. "*I* rejoice in each day's blessing as it comes, and never wish for more than

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does come. *You*, who are wishing the present to be better than it is, and fearing that the future may be worse, are meanwhile losing all enjoyment of the hour that now is. You think this wise. To me it seems as foolish as it is ungrateful!"

With these words the Robin flew away as fast as he could, for, to say the truth, he felt conscious of having been a little impertinent in his last remark. He was rather a young bird to be setting other people right; but a Robin is always a bold fellow, and has, moreover rather a hot temper of his own, though he is a kind creature at the bottom. He had been insulted too, there was no doubt; but when people feel themselves in the right, what need is there of ruffling feathers and being saucy?

And the Robin did honestly feel himself in the right; but, oh! how hard it is to resist the influence of evil suggestions, even when one knows them to be such, and turns aside from them. They are so apt to steal back

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into the heart unawares, and undermine the principle that seemed so steady before. To a certain extent this was the case with our poor little friend; and those who are disposed to judge harshly of his weakness, must remember that he was very young, and could not be expected to go on right always without a mistake.

Certain it is, that he drooped awhile in spirits, as the winter advanced. He sang every day, it is true, and would still have maintained his own opinions against any one who should have opposed them; but he was decidedly disturbed in mind, and thought sadly too much, for his own peace and comfort, of what both the Tortoise and Blackbird had said.

The colder the days became, the more he became depressed; not that there was any cold then that he really cared about, but he was fidgeting about the much greater cold which he had been told was coming; and, as he hopped about on the grass round the

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fountain, picking up worms and food, he was ready to drop a tear out of his bright black eye at the thought of the days when the ground was to be so hard that the worms could not come out, or his beak reach them.

Had this state of things gone on long, the Robin would have begun to wish to go to sleep, like the Tortoise ; and no more singing would have been heard in the plantation of the suburban villa that year.

But Robins are brave-hearted little fellows, as well as bold and saucy ; and one bright day our friend bethought himself that he would go and talk the matter over with an old Woodlark, who, he had heard, frequented a thicket at a considerable distance off.

On his way thither he heard several larks singing high up in the sky over the fields ; and by the time he reached the thicket he was in excellent spirits himself, and seemed to have left all his megrims behind

It was fortunate such was the case, for

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when, as he approached the thicket, he heard the Woodlark's note, it was so plaintive and low that it would have made anybody cry to listen to it. And when the Robin congratulated him on his singing, the Woodlark did not seem to care much for the compliment, but confided to his new acquaintance, that although he thought it right to sing and be thankful, as long as there was a bit of comfort left, he was not so happy as he seemed to be, since in reality he was always expecting to die some day of having nothing at all to eat.

"For," said he, "when the snow is on the ground, it is a perfect chance if one finds a morsel of food all day long."

"But I thought you had lived here several seasons," suggested the Robin, who in his braced condition of mind was getting quite reasonable again.

"So I have," murmured the Woodlark, heaving his breast with a touching sigh.

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"Yet you did not die of having nothing to eat, last winter?" observed the Robin.

"It appears not," ejaculated the Woodlark, as gravely as possible, and with another sigh; whereat the Robin's eye actually twinkled with mirth, for he had a good deal of fun in his composition, and could not but smile to himself at the Woodlark's solemn way of admitting that he was alive.

"Nor the winter before?" asked he.

"No," murmured the Woodlark again.

"Nor the winter before that?" persisted the saucy Robin.

"Well, no; of course not," answered the Woodlark, somewhat impatiently, "because I am here, as you see."

"Then how did you manage when the snow came, and there was no food?" inquired Robin.

"I never told you there was actually *no* food in those other winters," answered the Woodlark, somewhat peevishly, for he did not want to be disturbed in his views. "Little

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bits of things did accidentally turn up, always. But that is no proof that it will ever happen again. It was merely chance!"

"Ah, my venerable friend," cried the Robin, "have you no confidence in the kind chance that has befriended you so often before?"

"I can never be sure that it will do so again," murmured the Woodlark, despondingly.

"But when that kind chance brings you one comfortable day after another, why should you sadden them all by these fears for by and by?"

"It is a weakness, I believe," responded the Woodlark. "I will see what I can do towards enjoying myself more. You are very wise, little Robin; and it is a wisdom that will keep you happy all the year round."

Here the Woodlark rose into the air, and performed several circling flights, singing vigorously all the time. The old melancholy pervaded the tone, but that might be mere

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habit. The song was, at any rate, more earnest and strong.

"That is better, already," cried the Robin, gaily; "and for my part, if I am ever disposed to be dull myself, I shall think of what you told me just now of all the past winters; namely, that *little bits of things did always accidentally turn up.* What a comforting fact!"

"To think of my ever having been able to comfort anybody!" ejaculated the Woodlark. "I must try to take comfort myself."

"Ay, indeed," cried the Robin, earnestly; "it is faithless work to give advice which you will not follow yourself."

So saying, the Robin trilled out a pleasant farewell, and returned to the shrubbery grounds, where, in an ivy-covered wall, he had found for himself a snug little winter's home.

It was during the ensuing week, and while the Robin was in his blithest mood, and singing away undisturbed by megrims of any

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kind, but rejoicing in the comforts of each day as it came, that the Tortoise once more accosted him.

When Robin first heard his voice, he was startled, and feared another scolding, but he was quite mistaken. The old Tortoise was sitting by the side of an opening in the ground, which he had scratched out very cleverly with his claws. It was in a corner among some stones which had lain there for years, and there was one large one in particular overhung the entrance of the hole. The wind had drifted a vast quantity of leaves in that direction, and some of them had been blown into the hole, so that it looked like a warm underground bed.

"Hop down to me, little bird!" was the Tortoise's address, in a quiet, friendly voice; an order with which the Robin at once complied. "Ah, you need not be afraid," continued he, as the Robin alighted by his side. "I am quite happy, now. See what a comfortable place I have made myself here in

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the earth. There, there, put your head in and peep. Did you ever see anything so snug in your life?"

The Robin peered in with his sharp little eye, and really admired the Tortoise's ingenious labour very much.

"Hop in," cried the Tortoise gaily; "there's room enough and to spare, is there not?"

Robin hopped in, and looked round. He was surprised at the size and convenience of the place, and admitted that a more roomy and comfortable winter's bed could not be wished for.

"Who wouldn't go to sleep?" cried the Tortoise; "what say you, my little friend? But you need not say; I see it in your eye. You are not for sleep, yourself. Well, well, we have all our different ways of life, and yours is a pleasant folly, after all, when it doesn't disturb other people. And you won't disturb me any more this year, for I have made my arrangements at last, and shall soon

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be so sound asleep that I shall hear no more of your singing for the present. It's a nice bed, eh? isn't it? Not so nice, perhaps, as the warm sands of my native land; but the ground, even here, is much warmer inside it than people think, who know nothing of it, but the cold damp surface. Ah, if it wasn't, how would the snowdrop and crocus live through the winter? Well, I called you here to say good-bye, and show you where I am, and to ask you to remember me in the Spring; if—that is, of course,—you survive the terrible weather that is coming. You don't mind my having been somewhat cross the other day, do you? I am apt to get testy now and then, and you disturbed me in my nap, which nobody can bear. But you will forgive and forget, won't you, little bird?"

The kind-hearted Robin protested his affectionate feeling in a thousand pretty ways.

"Then you won't forget me in the Spring," added the Tortoise; "but come here and sit

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on the laurel bush, and sing me awake. Not till the days are mild, and the plants get juicy, of course, but as soon as you please, then. And now, good-bye. There's a strange feeling in the air to-day, and before many hours are over there will be snow and frost. Yours is a pleasant folly. I wish it may not cost you dear. Good-bye."

Hereupon the old Tortoise huddled away into the interior of his hole, where he actually disappeared from sight; and as soon afterwards the drifting leaves completely choked up the entrance of the place, no one could have suspected what was there but those who knew the secret beforehand. He had been right in his prognostication of the weather. A thick, gloomy, raw evening was succeeded by a bitterly cold night, and towards the morning the over-weighted clouds began to discharge themselves of some of their snow; and as the day wore, the flakes got heavier and heavier and heavier; and as no sunshine came out to melt them, and a biting frost set

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in, the country was soon covered with a winding-sheet of white. And now, indeed, began a severe trial of the Robin's patience and hope. It is easy to boast while the sun still shines, if ever so little ; but it is not till the storm comes that the mettle of principle is known.

"There are berries left, yet," said he, with cheerful composure, as he went out to seek for food, and found a holly-tree by the little gate of the plantation, red with its beautiful fruit. And, after he had eaten, he poured out a song of joy and thankfulness into the cold wintry sky, and finally retreated under his ivy bush at night, happy and contented as before.

But that terrible storm lasted for weeks without intermission ; or if it did intermit, it was but to a partial thaw, which the night of frost soon bound up again as firmly, or more firmly than ever.

Many other birds besides himself came to the holly-tree for berries, and it was wonder-

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ful how they disappeared, first from one branch, and then from another : but still the Robin sang on. He poured out his little song of thanks after every meal. That was his rule. Other birds would jeer at him sometimes, but he could not be much moved by jeers. He had brought his bravery, and his patience, and his hope into the field against whatever troubles might arise, and a few foolish jests would not trouble a spirit so strung up to cheerful endurance.

"I will sing the old Tortoise awake, yet," said he, many and many a time, when, after chanting his little thanksgiving in the holly-tree, he would hover about the spot where his friend lay asleep in the ground, and think of the spring that would one day come, bringing its mild days and its juicy plants, and its thousand pleasant delights.

I do not say but that it was a great trial to our friend when, after dreaming all these things in his day-dreams, he was roused up at last by feeling himself unusually cold and

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stiff; and was forced to hurry to his ivy home to recover himself at all.

The alternations, too, of winter, are very trying. The long storm of many weeks ceased at last, and a fortnight of open weather ensued, which, although wet and cold, gave much more liberty to the birds, and allowed of greater plenty of food. The Robin could now hop once more on the grass round the fountain, and get at a few worms, and pick up a few seeds. And he was so delighted with the change, that he half hoped the winter was over; and he sat in the laurel-tree by the Tortoise's cave, and poured out long ditties of anticipative delight. But the bitterest storm of all was yet in store,—the storm of disappointed hope.

Oh, heavy clouds! why did you hang so darkly over the earth just before the Christmas season? Oh, why did the fields become so white again, and the trees so laden with snow wreaths, and the waters so frozen and immoveable, just when all human beings

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wanted to rejoice and be glad? Did you come—perhaps you did!—to rouse to tender pity and compassionate love the hearts of all who wished to welcome their Saviour with hosannas of joy? but who cannot forget, if they read the gospel of love, that whosoever does a kindness to one of the least of His disciples, does it unto Him. Surely, thus may the bitter cold and the trying weather of a biting, snowy Christmas, be read. Surely, it calls aloud to every one, that *now* is the moment for clothing the naked, for feeding the hungry, and for comforting the afflicted.

Heavily, heavily, heavily, it came down. There were two days in which the Robin never left his ivy-covered hole, but hunger took him at last to the holly-tree by the little gate. Its prickly leaves were loaded with snow, and on one side the stem could not be seen at all. Was it his fancy, or was the tree really much less than before? He hopped from one white branch to another, and fancied that large pieces were gone. He

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peered under and over, picked at the leaves and shook down little morsels of snow; but nowhere, nowhere, nowhere, could a single berry be found!

The Robin flew about in distress, and in so doing caught sight of a heap of holly, laurel, and bay branches that were laid aside together to be carried up to the house to decorate its walls. He picked two or three of the berries from them as they lay there,—ripe red berries, such as he had gathered but lately from the tree; and then came the gardener by, who carried the whole away. He flew after the man as he walked, and never left him until he disappeared with his load into the house. Its unfriendly doors closed against the little wanderer, and no one within knew of the wistful eyes which had watched the coveted food out of sight."

"I have eaten; let me be thankful," was the Robin's resolute remark, as he flew away from the house and returned to the holly-tree, which had so lately been his store-house of

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NOT LOST, BUT GONE BEFORE.

Motes in the Sunbeam. p. 109.

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hope, and from its now stripped and barren branches, poured out, as before, his lay of glad thanksgiving for what he had had.

Not a breath of wind was blowing, not a leaf stirred; not a movement of any kind took place, save when some overloaded branch dropped part of its weight of snow on the ground below; as the sweet carol of the still hungry little bird rose through the air on that dark, still, winter's afternoon.

What did it tell of? Oh, surely, that clear, bell-like melody, that musical tone, that exquisite, harmonious trill, told of something,—of something, I mean, besides the tale of a poor little desolate bird, whose food had been snatched away before his eyes, and who might be thought to have eaten his last meal.

Surely, those solitary notes of joy, poured into the midst of a gloom so profound, were as an angel's message, coming with a promise of peace and hope, at a moment when both seemed dead and departed.

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Homeward from his day's work of business, there passed by, at that moment, the owner and inhabitant of the little suburban villa. It had been a melancholy day to him, for it was saddened by painful recollections. It was the anniversary of the day on which his wife had been laid in her churchyard grave, and since that event two sons had sailed for the far-off land of promise, which puts a hemisphere between the loved and loving on earth. So that far-distant land held them, whilst one—not so distant, perhaps, but more unattainable for the present—held the other. No wonder, therefore, that on that owner's face, as he approached his home, there hung a cloud of suffering and care, which not even the thought of the Christmas-day at hand, and the children yet spared to his hearth, could prevent or dispel.

Verily the autumn of man's life comes down upon him as the autumn season descends upon the earth. Clouds and tears mixed with whatever brightness may remain.

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All at once, however, the abstracted look of sorrow is startled. What is it that he hears? He is passing outside the little plantation which skirts the grounds. He is close to the little gate near which the holly-tree grows. He pauses—he stops—he lifts up those troubled eyes. Surely, a wholesome tear is stealing over the cheek. Beautiful, tender, affecting, as the voice of the cuckoo in spring, there swept over the listener's heart the autumnal song of the Robin. Sing on, sing on, from the top of your desolate tree, oh little bird of cheerfulness and hope! Pour out again that heaven-taught music of contentment with the hour that now is. Shalt *thou* be confident of protection, and *man* destitute of hope? Shalt *thou*, in the depth of thy winter's trial, have joy and peace, and man never look beyond the cloud?

Poor little innocent bird! he sang his pretty song to an end, and then he flew away. Quarrel not with him, if in painful recollec-

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tion of the holly-berries that had been carried into the house, he hovered round its windows and doors, with anxious and curious stealth. Whether across the middle of one window he observed a tempting red cluster hanging down inside, no one can say. But the tantalizing pain of such a sight, if he felt it, was soon over, for just then the window was opened, and along its outside ledge something was strewn by a careful hand. The window was closed again immediately, and, whoever it was within, retreated backwards into the room.

From a standard rose-bush, whither he had flown when the window was opened, our little friend watched the affair.

Presently a fragrant odour seemed to steal towards him—something unknown yet pleasant—something tempting and very nice. Was there any risk to be feared? All seemed quiet and still. Should he venture? Ah, that odour again! it was irresistible.

In another minute he was on the ledge,

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and boldly, as if a dozen invitations had bidden him welcome to the feast, he was devouring crumb after crumb of the scattered bread.

A burst of delighted laughter from within broke upon his elysium of joy for a moment, and sent him back with sudden flight to the rose-bush. But no disaster ensued, and he was tempted again and again.

The children within might well laugh at the saucy bird, whom their father had, by his gift of bread crumbs, tempted to the place. They laughed at the bold hop,—the eager pecking,—the brilliant, bead-like eye of their new guest,—and at the bright red of his breast; but it was a laugh that told of nothing but kind delight.

"Little bits of things do accidentally turn up, always, indeed!" said the Robin to himself, as he crept into his ivy hole that evening to sleep; and he dreamt half the night of the wonderful place and the princely fare. And the next morning, long before anybody

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was awake and up, he was off to the magical window-ledge again, but neither children nor bread-crumbs were there. (How was he to know about breakfast hours, and the customs of social life?) So it almost seemed to him as if his evening's meal had been a dream, too good a thing to be true, or if it ever had been true, too good to return. Yet a sweeter song was never heard on a summer eve, than that with which the Robin greeted that early day, the Christmas morning of the year.

Perched in the laurel-bush near the Tortoise's retreat, he told his sleeping friend a long, marvellous tale of his yesterday's adventures, and promised him more news against the time when he should return to wake him up in the spring.

Nor did he promise in vain; for whether the Tortoise would be patient enough to listen or not, there was no doubt the Robin had plenty to tell. He had to tell of the daily meal that was spread for him, by those

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suddenly raised up friends—that daily meal that had never failed; of the curious tiny house that was erected for him at the end of the ledge, which, carpeted as it was with cotton-wool and hay, formed almost *too* warm a roosting-place for his hardy little frame.

But even to the Tortoise he could never tell all he had felt during that wonderful winter; for he could never explain to any one the mysterious friendship which grew up between himself and his protectors. He could never describe properly the friendly faces that sat round the breakfast-table on which at last he was allowed to hop about at will.

He told, however, how he used to sing on the rose-tree outside, every morning of every day, to welcome the waking of his friends, and how, in the late afternoons, the father would sometimes open the window, and sit there alone by himself, listening to his song.

"Come come, my little friend," remarked

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the Tortoise, when he did awake at last, and had come out of his cavern-bed, and heard the account; "I have been asleep for a long time, and I dare say have been dreaming all manner of fine things myself, if I could but think of them. Now, I suspect you have had a nap, as well. However, I am very glad to see you alive, and not so half-starved looking as I expected. But as to your having sung every day, and had plenty to eat every day, and been so happy all the time,—take my advice, don't try to cram older heads than your own with travellers' tales!"

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V.

Not Lost, But Gone Before.

——Will none of you, in pity
To those you left behind, disclose the secret?"

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

"I WONDER what becomes of the Frog, when he climbs up out of this world, and disappears, so that we do not see even his shadow—till, plop! he is among us again when we least expect him. Does anybody know where he goes to? Tell me, somebody, pray!"

Thus chattered the Grub of a Dragon-fly, as he darted about with his numerous companions, in and out among the plants at the bottom of the water in search of prey.

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The water formed a beautiful pond in the centre of a wood. Stately trees grew around it, and reflected themselves on its surface as on a polished mirror; and the bulrushes and forget-me-nots which fringed its sides seemed to have a two-fold life, so perfect was their image below.

"Who cares what the frog does?" answered one of those who overheard the Grub's inquiry; "what is it to us?"

"Look out for food for yourself," cried another, "and let other people's business alone."

"But I have a curiosity on the subject," expostulated the first speaker. "I can see all of you when you pass by me among the plants in the water here; and when I don't see you any longer, I know you have gone further on. But I followed a Frog just now as he went upwards, and all at once he went to the side of the water, and then began to disappear, and presently he was gone. Did

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he leave this world, do you think? And what can there be beyond?"

"You idle, talkative fellow," cried another, shooting by as he spoke, "attend to the world you are in, and leave the 'beyond,' if there is a 'beyond,' to those that are there. See what a morsel you have missed, with your wonderings about nothing." So saying, the saucy speaker seized an insect which was flitting right in front of his friend.

The curiosity of the Grub was a little checked by these and similar remarks, and he resumed his employment of chasing prey, for a time.

But, do what he would, he could not help thinking of the curious disappearance of the Frog, and presently began to tease his neighbours about it again,—*What becomes of the Frog when he leaves this world?* being the burden of his inquiry.

The minnows eyed him askance and passed on without speaking, for they knew no more than he did of the matter, and yet were

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loath to proclaim their ignorance; and the eels wriggled away in the mud out of hearing, for they could not bear to be disturbed.

The Grub got impatient, but he succeeded in inspiring several of his tribe with some of his own curiosity, and then went scrambling about in all directions with his followers, asking the same unreasonable questions of all the creatures he met.

Suddenly there was a heavy splash in the water, and a large yellow Frog swam down to the bottom among the grubs.

"Ask the Frog himself," suggested a Minnow, as he darted by overhead, with a mischievous glance of his eye. And very good advice it seemed to be, only the thing was much easier said than done. For the Frog was a dignified sort of personage, of whom the smaller inhabitants of the water stood a good deal in awe. It required no common amount of assurance to ask a creature of his standing and gravity, where he had been to, and where he had come from. He might

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justly consider such an inquiry as a very impertinent piece of curiosity.

Still, such a chance of satisfying himself was not to be lost, and after taking two or three turns round the roots of a water-lily, the Grub screwed up his courage, and approaching the Frog in the meekest manner he could assume, he asked—

"Is it permitted to a very unhappy creature to speak?"

The Frog turned his gold-edged eyes upon him in surprise, and answered—

"Very unhappy creatures had better be silent. I never talk but when I am happy."

"But *I* shall be happy if I may talk," interposed the Grub, as glibly as possible.

"Talk away, then," cried the Frog; "what can it matter to me?"

"Respected Frog," replied the Grub, "but it is something I want to ask you."

"Ask away," exclaimed the Frog, not in a very encouraging tone, it must be confessed; but still the permission was given.

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"What is there beyond the world?" inquired the Grub, in a voice scarcely audible from emotion.

"What world do you mean?" cried the Frog, rolling his goggle eyes round and round.

"This world, of course—our world," answered the Grub.

"This pond, you mean," remarked the Frog, with a contemptuous sneer.

"I mean the place we live in, whatever you may choose to call it," cried the Grub, pertly. "*I* call it the world."

"Do you, sharp little fellow?" rejoined the Frog. "Then what is the place you don't live in; the 'beyond' the world, eh?"

And the Frog shook his sides with merriment as he spoke.

"That is just what I want you to tell me," replied the Grub, briskly.

"Oh, indeed, little one!" exclaimed Froggy, rolling his eyes this time with an amused

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twinkle "Come, I shall tell you, then. It is dry land."

There was a pause of several seconds, and then, "Can one swim about, there?" inquired the Grub, in a subdued tone.

"I should think not," chuckled the Frog. "Dry land is not water, little fellow. That is just what it is *not*."

"But I want you to tell me what it *is*," persisted the Grub.

"Of all the inquisitive creatures I ever met, you certainly are the most troublesome," cried the Frog. "Well, then, dry land is something like the sludge at the bottom of this pond, only it is not wet, because there is no water."

"Really!" interrupted the Grub; "what is there then?"

"That's the difficulty," exclaimed Froggy. "There is something, of course, and they call it air; but how to explain it I don't know. My own feeling about it is, that it's

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the nearest approach to nothing, possible. Do you comprehend?"

"Not quite," replied the Grub, hesitating.

"Exactly; I was afraid not. Now just take my advice, and ask no more silly questions. No good can possibly come of it," urged the Frog.

"Honoured Frog," exclaimed the Grub "I must differ from you there. Great good will, as I think, come of it, if my restless curiosity can be stilled by obtaining the knowledge I seek. If I learn to be contented where I am, it will be something. At present I am miserable and restless under my ignorance."

"You are a very silly fellow," cried the Frog, "who will not be satisfied with the experience of others. I tell you the thing is not worth your troubling yourself about. But, as I rather admire your spirit, (which, for so insignificant a creature, is astonishing,) I will make you an offer. If you choose to take a seat on my back, I will carry you up

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to dry land myself, and then you can judge for yourself what there is there, and how you like it. I consider it a foolish experiment, mind, but that is your own look-out. I make my offer, to give you pleasure."

"And I accept it with a gratitude that knows no bounds," exclaimed the enthusiastic Grub.

"Drop yourself down on my back, then, and cling to me as well as you can. For, remember, if you go gliding off, you will be out of the way when I leave the water."

The Grub obeyed, and the Frog, swimming gently upwards, reached the bulrushes by the water's side.

"Hold fast," cried he, all at once, and then, raising his head out of the pond, he clambered up the bank, and got upon the grass.

"Now, then, here we are," exclaimed he. "What do you think of dry land?"

But no one spoke in reply.

"Halloo! gone!" he continued; "that's

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just what I was afraid of. He has floated off my back, stupid fellow, I declare. Dear, dear, how unlucky! but it cannot be helped. And, perhaps, he may make his way to the water's edge here after all, and then I can help him out. I will wait about and see."

And away went Froggy, with an occasional jaunty leap, along the grass by the edge of the pond, glancing every now and then among the bulrushes, to see if he could spy the dark, mailed figure of the Dragon-fly Grub.

But the Grub, meanwhile? Ah, so far from having floated off the Frog's back through carelessness, he had clung to it with all the tenacity of hope, and the moment came when the mask of his face began to issue from the water.

But the same moment sent him reeling from his resting-place into the pond, panting and struggling for life. A shock seemed to have struck his frame, a deadly faintness suc-

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ceeded, and it was several seconds before he could recover himself.

"Horrible!" cried he, as soon as he had rallied a little. "Beyond this world there is nothing but death. The Frog has deceived me. He cannot go *there*, at any rate."

And with these words, the Grub moved away to his old occupations, his ardour for inquiry grievously checked, though his spirit was unsubdued.

He contented himself for the present, therefore, with talking over what he had done, and where he had been, with his friends. And who could listen unmoved to such a recital? The novelty, the mystery, the danger, the all but fatal result, and the still unexplained wonder of what became of the Frog, —all invested the affair with a romantic interest; and the Grub had soon a host of followers of his own race, questioning, chattering, and conjecturing, at his heels.

By this time the day was declining, and the active pursuit of prey was gradually be-

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coming suspended for a time; when, as the inquisitive Grub was returning from a somewhat protracted ramble among the water-plants, he suddenly encountered, sitting pensively on a stone at the bottom of the pond, his friend the yellow Frog.

"*You* here!" cried the startled Grub; "you never left this world at all, then, I suppose. What a deception you must have practised upon me! But this comes of trusting to strangers, as I was foolish enough to do."

"You perplex me by your offensive remarks," replied the Frog, gravely. "Nevertheless, I forgive you, because you are so clumsy and ignorant, that civility cannot reasonably be expected from you, little fellow. It never struck you, I suppose, to think what *my* sensations were, when I landed this morning on the grass, and discovered that you were no longer on my back. Why did you not sit fast as I told you? But this is always the way with you foolish fellows, who

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think you can fathom and investigate everything. You are thrown over by the first practical difficulty you meet."

"Your accusations are full of injustice," exclaimed the indignant Grub.

It was clear they were on the point of quarrelling, and would certainly have done so, had not the Frog, with unusual magnanimity, desired the Grub to tell his own story, and clear himself from the charge of clumsiness if he could.

It was soon told; the Frog staring at him in silence out of those great goggle eyes, while he went through the details of his terrible adventure.

"And now," said the Grub, in conclusion, "as it is clear that there is nothing beyond this world but death, all your stories of going there yourself must be mere inventions. Of course, therefore, if you do leave this world at all, you go to some other place you are unwilling to tell me of. You have a right to your secret, I admit; but as I have no

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wish to be fooled by any more travellers' tales, I will bid you a very good evening."

"You will do no such thing, till you have listened as patiently to my story as I have done to yours," exclaimed the Frog.

"That is but just, I allow," said the Grub, and stopped to listen.

Then the Frog told how he had lingered by the edge of the pond, in the vain hope of his approach, how he had hopped about in the grass, how he had peeped among the bulrushes. "And at last," continued he, "though I did not see you yourself, I saw a sight which has more interest for you than for any other creature that lives," and there he paused.

"And that was?" asked the inquisitive Grub, his curiosity reviving, and his wrath becoming appeased.

"Up the polished green stalk of one of those bulrushes," continued the Frog, "I beheld one of your race slowly and gradually climbing till he had left the water behind

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him, and was clinging firmly to his chosen support, exposed to the full glare of the sun. Rather wondering at such a sight, considering the fondness you all of you show for the shady bottom of the pond, I continued to gaze, and observed presently,—but I cannot tell you in what way the thing happened,—that a rent seemed to come in your friend's body, and by degrees, gradually and after many struggles, there emerged from it one of those radiant creatures who float through the air I spoke to you of, and dazzle the eyes of all who catch glimpses of them as they pass,—a glorious Dragon-fly!

"As if scarcely awakened from some perplexing dream, he lifted his wings out of the carcase he was forsaking; and though shrivelled and damp at first, they stretched and expanded in the sunshine, till they glistened as if with fire.

"How long the strange process continued, I can scarcely tell, so fixed was I in astonishment and admiration; but I saw the beautiful

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creature at last poise himself for a second or two in the air before he took flight. I saw the four gauzy pinions flash back the sunshine that was poured on them. I heard the clash with which they struck upon the air ; and I beheld his body give out rays of glittering blue and green as he darted along, and away, away, over the water in eddying circles that seemed to know no end. Then I plunged below to seek you out, rejoicing for your sake in the news I brought."

The Frog stopped short, and a long pause followed.

At last—"It is a wonderful story," observed the Grub, with less emotion than might have been expected.

"A wonderful story, indeed," repeated the Frog ; "may I ask your opinion upon it?"

"It is for me to defer mine to yours," was the Grub's polite reply.

"Good! you are grown obliging, my little friend," remarked the Frog. "Well then, I incline to the belief, that what I have seen

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accounts for your otherwise unreasonable curiosity, your tiresome craving for information about the world beyond your own."

"That were possible, always provided your account can be depended upon," mused the Grub, with a doubtful air.

"Little fellow," exclaimed the Frog, "remember that your distrust cannot injure me, but may deprive yourself of a comfort."

"And you really think, then, that the glorious creature you describe, was once a—"

"Silence," cried the Frog; "I am not prepared with definitions. Adieu! the shades of night are falling on your world. I return to my grassy home on dry land. Go to rest, little fellow, and awake in hope."

The Frog swam close to the bank, and clambered up its sides, while the Grub returned to his tribe, who rested during the hours of darkness from their life of activity and pursuit.

* * * * * *

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"Promise!" uttered an entreating voice.

"I promise," was the earnest answer.

"Faithfully?" urged the first speaker.

"Solemnly," ejaculated the second.

But the voice was languid and weak, for the Dragon-fly Grub was sick and uneasy. His limbs had lost their old activity, and a strange oppression was upon him.

The creatures whom he had been accustomed to chase, passed by him unharmed; the waterplants, over which he used to scramble with so much agility, were distasteful to his feet; nay, the very water itself into which he had been born, and through which he was wont to propel himself with so much ingenuity, felt suffocating in its weight.

Upwards he must go, now, upwards, upwards! That was the strong sensation which mastered every other, and to it he felt he must submit, as to some inevitable law. And then he thought of the Frog's account, and felt a trembling conviction that the time had

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come when the riddle of his own fate must be solved.

His friends and relations were gathered around him, some of his own age, some a generation younger, who had only that year entered upon existence. All of them were followers and adherents, whom he had inspired with his own enthusiastic hopes; and they would fain have helped him, if they could, in this his hour of weakness. But there was no help for him now, but hope, and of that he possessed, perhaps, even more than they did.

Then came an earnest request, and then a solemn promise, that, as surely as the great hopes proved true, so surely would he return and tell them so.

"But, oh! if you should forget!" exclaimed one of the younger generation, timid and uneasy.

"Forget the old home, my friend?" ejaculated the sick Grub; "forget our life of enjoyment here, the ardour of the chase, the

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ingenious stratagems, the triumph of success? Forget the emotions of hope and fear we have shared together, and which I am bound, if I can, to relieve? Impossible!"

"But if you should not be able to come back to us," suggested another.

"More unlikely still," murmured the half-exhausted Grub. "To a condition so exalted as the one in store for us, what can be impossible? Adieu, my friends, adieu! I can tarry here no longer. Ere long you may expect to see me again in a new and more glorious form. Till then, farewell!"

Languid, indeed, was the voice, and languid were the movements of the Grub, as he rose upwards through the water to the reeds and bulrushes that fringed its bank. Two favourite brothers, and a few of his friends, more adventurous than the rest, accompanied him in his ascent, in the hope of witnessing whatever might take place above; but in this they were, of course, disappointed.

From the moment when, clinging with his

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feet to the stem of a bulrush, he emerged from his native element into the air, his companions saw him no more.

Eyes fitted only for the watery fluid were incapable of the upward glance and power of vision which would have enabled them to pierce beyond it; and the little côterie of discoverers descended, mortified and sorrowful, to the bed of the pond.

The sun was high in the heavens when the Dragon-fly Grub parted from his friends, and they waited through the long hours of the day for his return; at first, in joyful hope, then in tremulous anxiety, and, as the shades of evening began to deepen around, in a gloomy fear that bordered at last on despair. "He has forgotten us," cried some. "A death from which he never can awake, has overtaken him," said others. "He will return to us yet," maintained the few who clung to hope.

But in vain messenger after messenger shot upwards to the bulrushes, and to various

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parts of the pond, hoping to discover some trace of the lost one. All who went out returned back dispirited from the vain and weary search, and even the most sanguine began to grow sick at heart.

Night closed at last upon them, bringing a temporary suspension of grief; but the beams of the next rising sun, while it filled all nature beside with joy and hopefulness, awakened them, alas! to a sense of the bitterest disappointment, and a feeling of indignation at the deception which had been practised upon them.

"We did very well without thinking of such things," said they; "but to have hopes like those held out, and to be deceived after all,—it is more than we can be expected to bear in patience."

And bear it in patience they did not. With a fierceness which nothing could restrain, they hurried about in the destructive pursuit of prey, carrying a terrible vengeance in all directions.

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And thus passed on the hours of the second day—and before night a sort of grim and savage silence was agreed upon among them, and they ceased to bewail either the loss of him they had loved, or their own uncertain destiny.

But on the morning of the third day, one of the Grub's favourite brothers came sailing into the midst of a group, who were just rousing up from rest, ready to recommence the daily business of their life.

There was an unnatural brilliancy about his eyes, which shone as they had never done before, and startled all who looked at them, so that even the least observant had their attention arrested as he spoke.

"My friends," said he, "I was, as you know, one of our lost relative's favourite brothers. I trusted him, as if he had been a second self, and would have pledged myself a thousand times for his word. Judge, then, what I have suffered, from his promise

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remaining still unfulfilled. Alas! that he has not yet returned to us!

The favourite brother paused, and a little set in a corner by themselves murmured out, "How could he? The story about that other world is false."

"He has not returned to us," recommenced the favourite brother. "But, my friends, I feel that I am going to him, wherever that may be, either to that new life he spoke about, or to that death from which there is no return. Dear ones! I go, as he did, upwards, upwards, upwards! An irresistible desire compels me to it; but before I go, I renew to you—for myself and him—the solemn promise he once made to you. Should the great hopes be true, we will come back and tell you so. If I return not—but rely on me; my word is more to me than life. Adieu!"

The Grub rose upwards through the water followed by the last of the three brothers, and one or two of the younger ones; but on

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reaching the brink of the pond, he seized on a plant of the forget-me-not, and clinging to its firm flower-stalk, clambered out of the water into the open air.

Those who accompanied him watched him as he left the water; but after that they saw no more. The blank of his departure alone remained to them, and they sank down, sad and uneasy, to their home below.

As before, the hours of the day passed on, and not a trace of the departed one was seen. In vain they dwelt upon the consoling words he had spoken. The hope he had for a time reawakened died out with the declining sun, and many a voice was raised against his treachery and want of love. "He is faithless," said some. "He forgets us, like his brother, in his new fortune," cried others. "The story of that other world is false," uttered the little set, in the corner by themselves. Only a very few murmured to each other, "We will not despair."

One thing alone was certain, he did not

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return; and the disappointed crowds took refuge from thought as before, in the fiercest rapine and excitement, scattering destruction around them wherever they moved.

Another day had now elapsed, and then, in the early dawn following, the third and last brother crept slowly to a half-sleepy knot of his more particular friends, and roused them up.

"Look at my eyes," said he; "has not a sudden change come over them? They feel to me swelled and bursting, and yet I see with a clouded and imperfect vision. Doubtless it is with me now, as it was with our dear ones before they left us. I am oppressed, like them. Like them, an invisible power is driving me upwards, as they were driven. Listen, then; for on my parting words you may depend. Let the other world be what it will, gorgeous beyond all we can fancy of it, blissful beyond all we can hope of it, do not fear in me an altered or forgetful heart. I dare not promise more. Yet, if it be pos-

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sible, I will return. But, remember, there may well be that other world, and yet we, in ours, may misjudge its nature. Farewell! never part with hope. With your fears I know you never can part, now. Farewell!"

And he too went upwards, through the cool water, to the plants that bordered its side; and from the leaf of a golden king-cup he rose out of his native element into that aërial world, into which Water-grub's eye never yet could pierce.

His companions lingered awhile near the spot where he had disappeared, but neither sign nor sound came to them. Only the dreary sense of bereavement reminded them that he once had been.

Then followed the hours of vain expectation, the renewed disappointment, the cruel doubts, the hope that struggled with despair.

And after this, others went upwards in succession; for the time came to all when the lustrous eyes of the perfect creature shone through the masked face of the Grub.

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and he must needs pass forward to the fulfilment of his destiny.

But the result among those who were left was always the same. There were ever some that doubted and feared, ever some that disbelieved and ridiculed, ever some that hoped and looked forward.

Ah! if they could but have known, poor things! If those eyes, fitted for the narrow bounds of their water world, could have been endued with a power of vision into the purer element beyond, what a life-time of anxiety would they not have been spared! What ease, what rest would have been theirs!

But belief would, in that case, have been an irresistible necessity, and hope must have changed her name.

And the Dragon-fly, meanwhile—was he really faithless as they thought? When he burst his prison-house by the water side, and rose on glittering wings into the summer air, had he indeed no memory for the dear ones he had so lately left? No tender concern for

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their griefs and fears? No recollection of the promise he had made?

Ah! so far from it, he thought of them amidst the transports of his wildest flights, and returned ever and ever to the precincts of that world which had once been the only world to him. But in that region, also, a power was over him superior to his own, and to it his will must submit. To the world of waters he could never more return.

The least touch upon its surface, as he skimmed over it with the purpose of descent, brought on a deadly shock, like that which, as the Water-grub, he had experienced from emerging into air, and his wings involuntarily bore him instantly back from the unnatural contact.

"Alas! for the promise made in ignorance and presumption, miserable Grub that I was," was his bitter, constantly repeated cry.

And thus, divided and yet near, parted yet united by love, he hovered about the barrier that lay between them, never quite,

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perhaps, without a hope that some accident might bring his dear ones into sight.

Nor was his constancy long unrewarded, for as, after even his longest roamings, he never failed to return to the old spot, he was there to welcome the emancipated brother, who so soon followed him.

And often, after that, the breezy air by the forest pond would resound in the bright summer afternoons with the clashing of Dragon-flies' wings, as, now backwards, now forwards, now to one side, now to another without turn or intermission, they darted over the crystal water, in the rapture of the new life.

It might be, on those occasions, that some fresh arrival of kindred from below added a keener joy to their already joyous existence. Sweet assuredly it was to each newcomer, when the riddle of his fate was solved, to find in the new region not a strange and friendless abode, but a home rich with the welcomes of those who had gone before.

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Sweet also it was, and strange as sweet, to know that even while they had been trembling and fearing in their ignorant life below, gleams from the wings of those they lamented were dropping like star-rays on their home, reflected hither and thither from the sun that shone above. Oh! if they could but have known!

Beautiful forest pond, crowded with mysterious life, of whose secrets we know so little, who would not willingly linger by your banks for study and for thought! There, where the Beech-tree throws out her graceful arms, glorying in the loveliness that is reflected beneath: there, where in the nominal silence the innocent birds pour out their music of joy; there, where the blue Forget-me-not tells its tale of old romance, and the long grasses bend over their pictured shadows: there, where the Dragon-flies still hover on the surface of the water, longing to reassure the hearts of the trembling race, who are still hoping and fearing below.

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VI.

Training and Restraining.

"Train up a child in the way he should go."—Prov. xxii. 6

"WHAT a fuss is made about you, my dear little friends!" murmured the Wind, one day, to the flowers in a pretty villa garden. "I am really quite surprised at your submitting so patiently and meekly to all the troublesome things that are done to you! I have been watching your friend the Gardener for some time to-day; and now that he is gone at last, I am quite curious to hear what you think and feel about your unnatural bringing up."

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TRAINING AND RESTRAINING.

Motes in the Sunbeam. p. 140.

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"*Is* it unnatural?" inquired a beautiful Convolvulus Major, from the top of a tapering fir-pole, up which she had crept, and from which her velvet flowers were suspended like purple gems.

"I smile at your question," was the answer of the Wind. "You surely cannot suppose that in a natural state you would be forced to climb regularly up one tall bare stick such as I see you upon now. Oh, dear no! Your cousin, the wild Convolvulus, whom I left in the fields this morning, does no such thing, I assure you. She runs along and climbs about, just as the whim takes her. Sometimes she takes a turn upon the ground; sometimes she enters a hedge, and plays at bo-peep with the birds in the thorn and nut-trees—twisting here, curling there, and at last, perhaps coming out at the top, and overhanging the hedge with a canopy of green leaves and pretty white flowers. A very different sort of life from yours, with a Gardener always after you, trimming you in one

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place, fastening up a stray tendril in another, and fidgeting you all along—a sort of perpetual 'musn't go here'—'musn't go there.' Poor thing! I quite feel for you! Still I must say you make me smile; for you look so proud and self-conscious of beauty all the time, that one would think you did not know in what a ridiculous and dependent position you are placed."

Now the Convolvulus was quite abashed by the words of the Wind, for she was conscious of feeling very conceited that morning, in consequence of having heard the Gardener say something very flattering about her beauty; so she hung down her rich bell-flowers rather lower than usual, and made no reply.

But the Carnation put in her word: "What you say about the Convolvulus may be true enough, but it cannot apply to *me*. I am not aware that I have any poor relations in this country, and I myself certainly require all the care that is bestowed upon

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me. This climate is both too cold and too damp for me. My young plants require heat, or they would not live; and the pots we are kept in, protect us from those cruel wire-worms who delight to destroy our roots."

"Oh!" cried the Wind, "our friend the Carnation is quite profound and learned in her remarks, and I admit the justice of all she says about damp and cold, and wire-worms; but,"—and here the Wind gave a low-toned whistle as he took a turn round the flower-bed—"but what I maintain, my dear, is, that when you are once strong enough and old enough to be placed in the soil, those gardeners ought to let you grow and flourish as nature prompts, and as you would do were you left alone. But no! forsooth, they must always be clipping, and trimming, and twisting up every leaf that strays aside out of the trim pattern they have chosen for you to grow in. Why not allow your silver tufts to luxuriate in a natural manner? Why must every single flower be

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tied up by its delicate neck to a stick the moment it begins to open? Really, with your natural grace and beauty, I think that you might be trusted to yourself a little more!"

And the Carnation began to think so too; and her colour turned deeper as a feeling of indignation arose within her at the childish treatment to which she had been subjected. "With my natural grace and beauty," repeated she to herself, "they might certainly trust me to myself a little more!"

Still the Rose-tree stood out that there must be some great advantages in a Gardener's care; for she could not pretend to be ignorant of her own superiority to all her wild relations in the woods. What a difference in size, in colour, and in fragrance!

Then the Wind assured the Rose he never meant to dispute the advantage of her living in a rich-soiled garden; only there was a natural way of growing, even in a garden; and he thought it a great shame for the gar-

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deners to force the Rose-tree into an unnatural way, curtailing all the energies of her nature. What could be more outrageous, for example, than to see one rose growing in the shape of a bush on the top of the stem of another? "Think of all the pruning necessary," cried he, "to keep the poor thing in the round shape so much admired. And what is the matter with the beautiful straggling branches, that they are to be cut off as fast as they appear? Why not allow the healthy Rose-tree its free and glorious growth? Why thwart its graceful droopings or its high aspirings? Can it be *too* large or *too* luxuriant? Can its flowers be *too* numerous? Oh, Rose-tree, you know your own surpassing merits too well to make you think this possible!"

And so she did, and a new light seemed to dawn upon her as she recollected the spring and autumnal prunings she regularly underwent, and the quantities of little branches that were yearly cut from her sides, and car-

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ried away in a wheelbarrow. "It is a cruel and a monstrous system, I fear," said she.

Then the Wind took another frolic round the garden, and made up to the large white Lily, into whose refined ear he whispered a doubt as to the necessity or advantage of her thick powerful stem being propped up against a stupid, ugly stick! He really grieved to see it! Did that lovely creature suppose that Nature, who had done so much for her that the fame of her beauty extended throughout the world, had yet left her so weak and feeble that she could not support herself in the position most calculated to give her ease and pleasure? "Always this tying up and restraint!" pursued the Wind, with an angry puff. "Perhaps I am prejudiced; but as to be deprived of freedom would be to me absolute death, so my soul revolts from every shape and phase of slavery!"

"Not more than mine does!" cried the proud white Lily, leaning as heavily as she could against the strip of matting that tied

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her to her stick. But it was of no use—she could not get free; and the Wind only shook his sides, and laughed spitefully as he left her and then rambled away to talk the same shallow philosophy to the Honeysuckle that was trained up against a wall. Indeed, not a flower escaped his mischievous suggestions. He murmured among them all—laughed the trim cut Box-edges to scorn—maliciously hoped the Sweet-peas enjoyed growing in a circle, and running up a quantity of crooked sticks—and told the flowers, generally, that he should report their unheard-of submission and meek obedience wherever he went.

Then the white Lily called out to him in great wrath, and told him he mistook their characters altogether. They only submitted to these degrading restraints because they could not help themselves; but if he would lend them his powerful aid, they might free themselves from at least a part of the unnatural bonds which enthralled them.

To which the wicked Wind, seeing that

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his temptations had succeeded, replied, in great glee, that he would do his best; and so he went away, chuckling at the discontent he had caused.

All that night the pretty silly flowers bewailed their slavish condition, and longed for release and freedom: and at last they began to be afraid that the Wind had only been jesting with them, and that he would never come to help them, as he had promised. However, they were mistaken; for, at the dawn, there began to be a sighing and a moaning in the distant woods, and by the time the sun was up, the clouds were driving fast along the sky, and the trees were bending about in all directions; for the Wind had returned,—only now he had come in his roughest and wildest mood,—knocking over everything before him. "Now is your time, pretty flowers!" shouted he, as he approached the garden; and "Now is our time!" echoed the flowers tremulously, as, with a

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sort of fearful pleasure, they awaited his approach.

He managed the affair very cleverly, it must be confessed. Making a sort of eddying circuit round the garden, he knocked over the Convolvulus-pole, tore the strips of bast from the stick that held up the white Lily, loosed all the Carnation flowers from their fastenings, broke the Rose-tree down, and levelled the Sweet-peas to the ground. In short in one half-hour he desolated the pretty garden; and when his work was accomplished, he flew off to rave about his deed of destruction in other countries.

Meanwhile, how fared it with the flowers? The Wind was scarcely gone before a sudden and heavy rain followed, so that all was confusion for some time. But towards the evening the weather cleared up, and our friends began to look around them. The white Lily still stood somewhat upright, though no friendly pole supported her juicy stem; but, alas! it was only by a painful

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effort she could hold herself in that position. The Wind and the weight of rain had beat her forward once, beyond her strength, and there was a slight crack in one part of the stalk, which told that she must soon double over and trail upon the ground. The Convolvulus fared still worse. The garden beds sloped towards the south; and when our friend was laid on the earth—her pole having fallen—her lovely flowers were choked up by the wet soil which drained towards her. She felt the muddy weight as it soaked into her beautiful velvet bells, and could have cried for grief: she could never free herself from this nuisance. O that she were once more climbing up the friendly fir-pole! The Honeysuckle escaped no better; and the Carnation was ready to die of vexation, at finding that her coveted freedom had levelled her to the dirt.

Before the day closed, the Gardener came whistling from his farm work, to look over his pretty charges. He expected to see a

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few drooping flowers, and to find that one or two fastenings had given way. But for the sight that awaited him he was not prepared at all. Struck dumb with astonishment, he never spoke at first, but kept lifting up the heads of the trailing, dirtied flowers in succession. Then at last he broke out into words of absolute sorrow :—"And to think of my mistress and the young lady coming home so soon, and that nothing can be done to these poor things for a fortnight, because of the corn harvest! It's all over with them, I fear ;" and the Gardener went his way.

Alas! what he said was true; and before many days had passed, the shattered Carnations were rotted with lying in the wet and dirt on the ground. The white Lily was languishing discoloured on its broken stalk ; the Convolvulus' flowers could no longer be recognised, they were so coated over with mud stains ; the Honeysuckle was trailing along among battered Sweet-peas, who never could succeed in shaking the soil from their

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fragrant heads; and though the Rose-tree had sent out a few straggling branches, she soon discovered that they were far too weak to bear flowers—nay, almost to support themselves—so that they added neither to her beauty nor her comfort. Weeds meanwhile sprang up, and a dreary confusion reigned in the once orderly and brilliant little garden.

At length, one day before the fortnight was over, the house-dog was heard to bark his noisy welcome, and servants bustled to and fro. The mistress had returned; and the young lady was with her, and hurried at once to her favourite garden. She came bounding towards the well-known spot with a song of joyous delight; but, on reaching it, suddenly stopt short, and in a minute after burst into a flood of tears! Presently, with sorrowing steps, she bent her way round the flower-beds, weeping afresh at every one she looked at; and then she sat down upon the lawn, and hid her face in her hands. In this

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position she remained, until a gentle hand was laid upon her shoulder.

"This is a sad spectacle, indeed, my darling," said her mother's voice.

"Never mind about the garden, Mamma," replied the young girl, lifting up her tearful face; "we can plant new flowers, and tie up even some of these afresh. But what I have been thinking is, that now, at last, I quite understand what you have so often said about the necessity of training, and restraint, and culture, for us as well as for flowers, in a fallen world. The wind has torn away these poor things from their fastenings, and they are growing wild whichever way they please. I know I should once have argued, that if it were their *natural* mode of growing it must therefore be the best. But I cannot say so, now that I see the result. They are doing whatever they like, unrestrained; and the end is, that my beautiful GARDEN is turned into a WILDERNESS."

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"A curly headed urchin stood by a pump, looking disconsolately at the large heavy handle which he could not lift."

le of Blessing. FRONTISPIECE.

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THE CIRCLE OF BLESSING

AND OTHER

PARABLES FROM NATURE.

BY

MRS. ALFRED GATTY,

AUTHOR OF "WORLDS NOT REALISED," "PROVERBS ILLUSTRATED,"
"AUNT JUDY'S TALES," ETC.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
No. 530 BROADWAY.
1873.

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PREFACE.

"THERE are two books," says Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Religio Medici*, "from whence I collect my divinity: besides that written one of God, another of his servant, Nature — that universal and public manuscript that lies expanded unto the eyes of all: those that never saw Him in the one have discovered Him in the other." And afterwards, as if giving a particular direction to the above general statement, he adds: "Those strange and mystical transmigrations that I have observed in silkworms turned my philosophy into divinity. There is in these works of Nature, which seem to puzzle reason, something divine, and hath more in

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it than the eye of a common spectator doth discover."

Surely these two passages, from the works of the celebrated physician and philosopher, may justify an effort to gather moral lessons from some of the wonderful facts in God's creation: the more especially as St. Paul himself led the way to such a mode of instruction, in arguing the possibility of the resurrection of the body from the resurrection of vegetable life out of decayed seed: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die!" *Thou fool*—fool! not to be able, in thy disputatious wisdom, to read that book of "God's servant, Nature," out of which there are indeed far more actual lessons of analogy to be learned than we are apt to suppose or can at once detect. Assuredly, the changes of the silkworm, and the renewal of life from the vegetable seed, are not more remarkable than the soaring butterfly arising from the earth grub,—a change which, were the caterpillar a reasonable being, cap-

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able of contemplating its own existence, it would reject as an impossible fiction.

It was not, however, Sir Thomas Browne's remarks which gave rise to these Parables; for the first was written in an outburst of excessive admiration of Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales*, coupled with a regret that, although he had, in several cases, shown his power of drawing admirable morals from his exquisite peeps into nature, he had so often left his charming stories without an object or moral at all. Surely, was the thought, there either is, or may be devised, a moral in many more of the incidents of nature than Hans Andersen has traced; and on this view the "Lesson of Faith" was written—an old story; for the ancients, with deep meaning, made the butterfly an emblem of immortality—yet to familiarize the young with so beautiful an idea seemed no unworthy aim.

"The Sedge Warbler" is open to the naturalist's objection, that female birds do not

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sing. But it suited the moralist that they should do so in this particular case; and one may be content to err in such company as Spenser, Milton, Thomson, Beattie, and the immortal Izaak Walton.

"And in the violet-embroidered vale,
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee *her* sad song mourneth well."

Song of Comus.—MILTON.

"And Philomele *her* song with teares doth steepe."

The Shepherd's Calendar, Nov.—SPENSER.

"But the nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet, loud music out of *her* instrumental throat, that it might make mankind to think that miracles had not ceased."—WALTON'S *Angler*.

—— "All abandon'd to despair, *she* sings
Her sorrows through the night; and on the bough
Sole sitting, still at every dying fall
Takes up again *her* lamentable strain."

THOMSON'S *Seasons—Spring*.

"And shrill lark carols clear from *her* aerial tour."

BEATTIE'S *Minstrel*.

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An interesting account of the first discovery of the Sedge Warbler, of its habit of singing by night as well as by day, of its mocking notes, and of its distinctive differences from the Reed Warbler, may be found in White's *History of Selborne*.

Nothing but the present growing taste for the use of the microscope, and the study of zoöphytes, among other minute wonders of sea, earth and sky, could justify the selection of so little popular a subject for a parable as will be found in "Knowledge not the limit of Belief."

"The moon that shone in Paradise," was the exclamation of a very melancholy mind, which failed to recognise in the thought the hope it was calculated to convey, and which it has now been attempted to teach.

May the "Lesson of Faith" and the "Lesson of Hope" each work its appointed end; and may they combine to enforce on the

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mind of youth the value of "that still more excellent gift of charity," which "hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things!"

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The Circle of Blessing.

INTRODUCTION.

A PASSENGER-SHIP was passing through the region of equatorial calms. For days she had lain under an atmosphere of oppressive vapour. The sea wore a leaden, inky hue, and at two or three miles' distance from the vessel, air and ocean seemed to melt into each other. A sort of hot steaminess prevailed, which soaked through clothes, sails, and every article on board, and produced the most wretched languor and depression in every one subject to its influence.

People bore it according to their age, experience, and habits of self-control. The old sailors, who knew what they had, at times, to expect in those latitudes,—either from burning heat, suffocating mists, or

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drenching rains, contented themselves with wringing out their clothes, and enduring patiently what could not be avoided or altered. Several of the passengers, new to the trial, made the nearly vain experiment of plunging into sea-water for refreshment; but even sea-water seemed to have lost its magically tonic power here, where it was most needed, under the burning ardours of the Line.

Others, irritated by their sensations, irritated themselves yet more by vehement expressions of annoyance and disgust. They railed against their ill-luck, in having left home so as to encounter such detestable weather in their voyage; abused themselves as fools for having subjected themselves to such a risk, and looked up with faces clouded over with wrath and reproof at those "*intolerable and accursed mists*," which hung, truth to say, above and around the vessel on every side, with a thickness through which no eye could pierce.

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A young man had but just uttered that ill-conditioned phrase, when a passenger, of somewhat advanced age, and a demeanour calmed to serenity by knowledge and reflection, came up to him, and, although he was a stranger, spoke. "Young man," said he, "cease to dishonour God by such almost blasphemous complaints. Look up, rather, at those mists, and bless Him that they are there. You are indebted to them for the very bread which has supported your life up to this hour of your ignorant ingratitude."

And the man, advanced in years and wisdom, passed forward along the deck, and left the youth speechless among his astonished companions.

No explanation was given, and not another word of outward murmuring was heard. The ship went on her way; but whether that youth, after they emerged from the heavy oppression of the tropical calms, ever sought for the solution of the old man's statement, remains unknown.

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I.

The Circle of Blessing.

"Freely ye have received, freely give."
MATTHEW x. 8.

"COME back to me, my children—let us not part;" murmured the Sea to the Vapours, which rose from its surface, drawn upwards by the heat of the tropical sun. "Return to my bosom, and contribute your share to the preservation of my greatness and strength."

"There is no lasting greatness, but in distributed good," replied the Vapours; "behold, we carry your cooling influence to the heated air around. Let us alone, oh Sea! The work is good."

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"But done at my expense," murmured the Sea. "Is the air your parent, as I am, that you are so careful of its interests? Then why are you so neglectful of mine? Can you afford to be ungrateful to me, from whom your very existence springs? Deluded children! by diminishing my power you are sapping the foundations of your own life. Your very being depends on mine."

"Small and great, great and small, we all depend on each other," sang the Vapours, as they hovered in the air. "Mighty Ocean, give us of your abundance for those that need. It is but little that we ask."

"Divided interests are the ruin of fools," muttered the angry Sea.

"But extended ones the glory of the wise," replied the Vapours, as they still continued to rise. "See, now, have we not done, ourselves, what we would have you also do? Behold, we have left our salts in your bosom for those that need them."

"And I have cast them as a useless burden

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to my lowest depths," exclaimed the Sea, indignantly. "Have I not enough, already? Superfluous bounties deserve but little thanks, methinks."

"Yet in those depths perchance they may be welcomed, as we are above," persisted the Vapours. "It is ever thus: and all will be made good at last. Small and great, great and small, we are dependent on each other evermore."

"Begone, then," moaned the Sea. "You, who are willing to sacrifice a certain good for an uncertain conjecture, begone, and be yourselves the first victims of your folly. The breezes, that are now driving you forward across my surface, will rise to fury, and blow you into nothingness as you proceed. Scattered among the stormy gusts, where then will be my recompense for your loss? You, however, will not even exist to repent of your mad desertion of your home. Adieu! for ever and for ever, adieu!"

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"Adieu, but not for ever," answered the Vapours, as they dispersed before the wind.

It was not a satisfactory parting, perhaps; but often as their race had made the journey round the earth, it had never fallen within the power of any portion of them to explain the course of their career to the surface Sea, which grudged their departure. However, the Vapours had now commenced their circuit, and, carried onward by the steady south-east trade-winds to the regions of equatorial calms, they were met, in that wonderful belt of heat and accumulation, by breezes which in like manner were travelling from the north; and here this meeting caused for a while a lingering in their career. But these opposing winds, laden with vapours from the two hemispheres, had each their mission, and worked under an appointed law.

It was their province to carry the exhalations from north to south into the cooler sky above, where once more their course was free to travel round the world. Ascending thus,

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however, when the Vapours entered a more temperate atmosphere, their particles expanded, and a portion of them clung together in drops, which, whilst under the influence of excessive heat, they could never do. They then became much heavier than before; so heavy, indeed, that the winds were not able to bear them aloft.

"You cannot carry us all," said the Vapours to their struggling supporters. "Some of us will, therefore, return with a message of comfort to the mighty Sea, to tell him all is well."

But even when they came down in torrents of rain to his bosom, the Sea grumbled still. "It is well that a part, at least, of what was lost, returns," said he. But he neither knew nor cared what became of the rest.

The rest, however, fared happily and well; for high above earth and sea—so high, indeed, that they in no way interfered with the winds that swept below—they were borne along by the upper currents of air which were

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travelling to the north, and carried them forward on their journey of beneficence, and never-ceasing good.

Surely, it must have been a sweet sensation to have been drifted along by a never varying breeze through the higher regions of the sky, undisturbed by care, in a dream of delicious idleness and ease. But this was but a portion of the career of the Vapours from the Sea. At the next meeting, at the outskirts of the tropics, with travellers like themselves coming in the opposite direction, there was a fresh pressure of opposing breezes, a temporary lingering, and then a descent, by which they left those higher regions for ever. Henceforth they were to be dispersed by surface winds on their course of usefulness to man.

And if those Vapours had, for a time, when cradled in that blissful passage high over the tropics, forgotten their mission, there was no possibility of forgetting it henceforth. Taken up with triumphant delight by all the

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varying breezes that sport over the northern hemisphere, there was no direction in which they were not to be found. A portion was wanted here, another portion there; the snows of Iceland, and the vineyards of Italy, the orange groves of Spain, and the river which pours over the mighty rocks of Niagara, must all be fed at their appointed seasons, and the food was travelling to them now.

But the weary eye looks unsympathizingly round the vast expanse of the globe. It is enough if we can follow the Vapours through some stages of their journey of love.

On the summit of a mountain, over whose sides the gorse and heather were wont to flower together in bright profusion, and with their lovely intermixture of hues, all the ground was parched and dry. A burning sun by day, rarely followed by dewy nights; a summer drought, in fact, had ruled for weeks over the spot, and the shrunken flower-buds and parched leaves bore painful wit-

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ness to the fact. The little mountain tarn below was almost dry, and the Sundew flowers by its sides, which were wont to revel in the damp surrounding moss, had lost their nature altogether, and never now offered their coronet of sparkling drops to the admiration of those that passed.

The pretty tumbling waterfall lower down, too, which travellers used to delight to visit, and which was fed by streams from the hills, was reduced to a miserable trickle. Cottage children were sent to fetch water from distances so great, that they sat down and wept by the road-side on their errand; and farmers wore a gloomy, anxious look, which told of a thousand fears about their crops and cattle.

But, while they were thus troubled and careful, lo, the rescue was coming from afar! yea, travelling towards them upon the wings of the wind. Vapours from tropical seas, Vapours which had left behind them their no-longer-needed salt, were coming, accumulated

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as clouds, to fall as gracious rain and dews upon the thirsty regions of the North.

They are variable and fantastic winds, perhaps, that course over the northern hemisphere: not steady and uniform in their direction, like the trade-winds in the Tropics; nor like those upper currents far above the trade-winds, which carry the Vapours to the second belts of calms. No! variable and fantastic they certainly are, and, therefore, we cannot reckon on their arrival to a day,—nay, not to a month; but on their arrival at last we may always surely depend, and perhaps, in this trial of patient expectation, there is a lesson of quiet faith intended to be learnt.

And so, just as farmers, and cottage children, and the earth and its flowers, and leaves, and springs of water, had all sunk into a state of dismal distrust and discomfort, the deliverance came to them as they slept!

Slight variations in the wind had been ob-

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served for more than a day; but still no change of weather took place, until one night a steady breeze from the south-west set in, and prevailed for hours. And presently there was a gathering up of clouds all over the sky, though in the darkness of the night their arrival passed unobserved.

Gracious clouds! they were the Vapours of the Sea, which, after many wanderings, had found their way here, at last, on their mission of love. And, lo! the sound of waters was heard once more on the dried-up hills, and sweet, heavy showers dropped down on the delighted earth. All night long it continued, and all night long the earth was streaming tears of joy; and another day and another night succeeded, during which more or less rain or dew continued to descend.

"Welcome, welcome, O ye showers and dew!" were the Earth's first words; and, "Leave me now no more," her constant after-cry.

"Poor Earth! poor Earth!" murmured the

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Vapours, which, condensed into rain-drops, were trembling, like diamonds, on the leaves and flowers in the sunshine of the second dawn. "Poor Earth! poor Earth! you too refuse to learn the law which brought us here. What you have received so freely, will you not freely give?"

"Nay; but linger with me yet," expostulated the Earth; "and let me rather store up the superfluity for future use for myself. What do I know of the future, and what it may bring forth? How can I be sure that the fitful winds will supply me again in time of need? I cannot afford to think of others. Leave me, leave me not.

"None must store against a possible future evil, when so many are suffering under a present one," replied the Vapours; "nevertheless, a message of comfort will come to you, after we are gone."

And so, when the sun shone out in his heat and glory, the diamond rain-drops were drawn upwards from the flowers and leaves

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into the air once more. Only the little Sundews kept their coronets of crystal beads throughout the day, as was their custom: though how they managed it, it would be hard to say.

Perhaps as their own natural juices are so thick and clammy, these, mingling with the Vapours as they exuded, held them longer fast.

"You are our prisoners," was the triumphant cry of the Sundew flowers, as they glistened in their liquid gems.

"Nay, but why would you detain us, selfish flowers?" exclaimed the Vapours.

"Oh! you shall go, you shall go; but only gradually, as the moisture courses through our veins to re-supply your place. This is our way of life. But we must hear all from you first. All! all! all! and most of all, why you have tarried so long, till we had almost perished in the dreadful drought?"

It was a long story the Vapours had then to tell, of their irregular passage to the Polar

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Seas; and how, after their chilly sojourn there as snow, they had passed southwards once more on the summits of drifting icebergs, and again been exhaled, and given back to the ministry of the wandering winds.

"Surely," said they, "we have touched no place in all our wild journeyings where we have not left some blessing behind. Here and there, indeed, folks think they have had too much of us, and here and there too little; but, oh, my delicate friends, believe us, we are faithful and true to our mission all over the world. Behold, we pour into the earth as rain, or slide into it as moisture; and lo! the soil gives its gases into our care, and the roots of the plants draw us and them up together, and, feeding on them, expand, and flourish, and grow; and when the useful deed is done, and the sun shines down on our labour, up we ascend again to its absorbing rays, to be carried forward again and again, to other gracious deeds. Blame us not, therefore, if, in turning aside to some

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other case of need, we have come a little late to your hills. Own that you have not been forgotten!"

"It is true," murmured the Sundews, in return; "but remember, we pine and die without your presence."

"Dear little Sundews, there is not a flower in all the boggy heaths that is so dear to us as you are. See, now, we linger with you yet; there is moisture in your mossy bed around this tarn to last for many weeks; and ever as a portion of us steals away, its place shall be supplied from below, so that your flowers shall never miss their sparkling diadem of gems."

The Sundews had no need to tremble after that; but as the exhalations went up from the surface ground, and the moisture sank lower and lower down into it, a fear stole over the Earth that another drought might arise, for she knew not that all would return to her again in due season. But, when in the cool of the evening the Vapours descend-

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ed upon her bosom, as refreshing mist and dew, she received a portion of comfort. Nevertheless, like the Sea, she grumbled on.

"It is well that a part, at least, of what was lost, returns!" she remarked, in her greedy anxiety, as the sea had done before; and, like him, she neither knew nor cared what became of the rest.

There was a mission for every portion, however; and through the now saturated ground the rain-drops sank together, amidst roots, and stones, and soil, moistening all before them as they went, and replenishing the springs that ran among the hills.

The tumbling Waterfall had, by this time, well nigh given up hope. The mournful trickle with which it fell was an absolute mockery of its former precipitous haste;—when lo! some sudden influence is at work; a rush of vigour flows into the exhausted veins; there is a swelling in the distant springs; nearer and nearer it comes, and now, over the rocky ledge there is a heavier

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flow; a little more, and yet a little more; and then, at last, a rush of water full and fresh is heard!

"Welcome! welcome! O ye Springs and Floods," cried the Waterfall, as once more it rolled in its beauty along its precipitous course, scattering foam and spray upon the moss and flowers that graced its edge. "Stay in the mountains always, that I may thirst no more; leave me, leave me not again!"

"You, too, who live by giving and receiving," cried the Vapours, as they flushed the stream—"you, too, wishing to stop the gracious course of good? Oh shame, shame, shame!"

And then, as if in mockery of the request, a playful gust blew off from the waterfall as it descended, some of its glittering spray, and tossed it to the sunshiny air, where it dispersed once more in smoky mist,—but only to return in time of need.

Down in the lower country, where stately houses, enclosed in noble parks, adorned the

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land, a beautiful lake lay stretched under the noon-day sun. It was fed by the stream which, at some miles' distance, received the tumbling waterfall into its course, and then ran through the lake's broad sheet, escaping at the further end in a quick-flowing rill. On the placid, mirror-like surface majestic swans swept proudly by, not unsusceptible of the freshening in the water from the filling of the springs above.

A little pleasure-boat was floating lazily about, impelled occasionally forward by the stroke of an oar from a youth who, with one companion of his own age, and an elderly man who sat abstractedly reading a book, formed the passengers of this tiny bark.

The rower's young companion was lounging in a half-sitting, half-reclining posture in the bows of the boat, and both were gazing at the old Baronial Hall, which, with its quaint turrets, long terraces, and picturesque gardens, faced the lake at a slightly distant elevation, where it stood embosomed in trees.

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"Well! if the place were to be mine," ejaculated the lounger, with his eyes fixed upon it, "I know exactly what I should do. I would throw all your agricultural and educational, and endless improvement schemes overboard at once; leave them for those whose business it is to look after them; and enjoy myself, and live like a prince while I had the chance."

"And die worse than a beggar at last," cried the other youth, as he rested on his oars and looked at his cousin who had spoken —"I mean without a friend! You cannot secure even enjoyment, in stagnation," added he. "The very pond here is kept pure by giving out through a stream at one end, what it receives through a stream at the other."

"And the stream from which it receives," said the old man, looking up from his book, "is a type of God Himself; and the stream to which it gives, is a type of the human race. Those who receive from the fountain,

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without giving to the stream, work equally against the laws of Nature and of God."

A few strokes of the oar here carried the boat away, but surely that was the voice of him who, in the bygone year, had startled the ignorant murmurer in the voyage across the Line! Well is it with those who in the secrets of Nature read the wisdom of God!

Softly did that summer evening sink upon the park and the old Baronial Hall, and heavy were the mists and dews that hung over the woods, and gardens, and flowers, and great was the rejoicing in the country round, when after a time, they were followed by fertilizing rains. Fertilizing rains!—the words are easily spoken, but who knows their full meaning, save him who has watched over corn-fields or vineyards, threatened with ill-timed drought? We take a great deal for granted in this world, and expect that every thing as a matter of course ought to fit into our humours, and wishes, and wants; and it is often only when danger threatens,

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that we awake to the discovery, that the guiding reins are held by One whom we had well-nigh forgotten in our careless ease.

"If it had not thundered, the peasant had not made the sign of the cross," is the rude proverb of a distant land; and peasant and king are alike implicated in its meaning.

"It is all right now," observed the farmer, as he returned home in the evening, after contemplating the goodly acres drenched and dripping with rain.

And it was all right indeed, for, long after the farmer had forgotten his previous anxieties in sleep, the circle of blessing was at work in the length and breadth of his fields.

There, the condensed Vapours sank into the willing soil, which gave to them her gases and her salts. There, the fibres of the roots of corn or grass sucked up the welcome food which brought strength and power into the juices of the plant; and then, by slow but sure degrees, the stunted ears began

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to fill, and men said the harvest would be good.

"Stay with us for ever," asked the Corn-ears of the Vapours, as they felt themselves swell under the delicious influence. The Vapours made no answer, for they did not like to speak of death; but they dealt gently with the corn, and did not leave it till it had ripened gradually for the harvest, and no longer needed their aid; and then they exhaled once more into the air, to follow out their mission elsewhere.

A curly-headed urchin stood by a pump, looking disconsolately at the huge heavy handle, which he could not lift. A little watering-pot was grasped in his hands, and it was easy to see what he wanted. Some one passing by observed him, and with a smile gave him help. A very few strokes of the handle brought up the water from below, the little watering-pot was filled, and the child ran away. He had a garden of his own; a garden in which a few kidney-beans in one

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place, and sweet peas in another, with scatterings of mustard and cress, formed a not very usual mixture; but it served its purpose of giving employment and pleasure to the child.

The kidney-beans which he hoped to eat at dinner, were evidently the objects of his most attentive care, for he soaked them again and again with the water from his pot, tossing only a few drops of it over the flowers. Little guessed he of the long, long journey the Vapours of the Sea had made before they helped to fill the springs which fed the well over which the pump was built. Little guessed he either of what would become of them when, after helping to fill his kidney-beans with delicate juices, they returned back to the ministry of the winds.

When he touched his pinafore, after he had finished his work, he found it soaked with wet; and when, soon after, he saw it hung in front of the fire to dry, he sat down and amused himself by watching the steam as it

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rose from the linen, under the influence of heat.

Trifling it seems to tell—an every-day occurrence of life, not worth a record: yet there was a law even for the vapour that rose from the infant's pinafore in front of the nursery fire. Nothing shall be lost of that which God has ordained to good; and the Vapours were soon on their mission again. Through the chimney or window they escaped to the cooler air, and returned to their ceaseless work.

"Give us of your salts," was at last their request, as they percolated through the lower ground to join the mighty rivers which ran into the Sea. "Give us of your salts, and lime, and mineral virtues, oh thou Earth! that we may bear them with us to the Sea from which we came."

"Is not the Sea sufficient to itself?" inquired the jealous Earth.

"None are sufficient to themselves, oh careful Mother!" answered the Vapours, as

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they streamed in water along their way. "Small and great, great and small, we all depend on each other. How shall the Shells, and Coral Reefs, and Zoöphytes of the deep, continue to grow and live, if you refuse them the virtues of your soil? Give us of your salts, and lime, and the mineral deposites of your bosom, oh Mother Earth! that they may live and rejoice."

"Have you nothing to offer in return?" asked the still-hesitating Earth.

"Do you not know that we have left a blessing behind us wherever we have been?" exclaimed the Vapours. "But no matter for the past. See, we will do ourselves as we would have you do. We will bind ourselves in beauty in the caves of your kingdom, and live with you for ever."

So, as they passed on their way, loading themselves with the virtues of the Earth, some turned aside, and sinking to the subterranean depths, oozed with their limy burden through the roofs of caverns and sides

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of rocks, and were suspended in graceful stalactites, or shone out in many-sided crystal forms.

"Now I am satisfied," observed the Earth. "What I see I know. They have left me something behind for what they have taken away."

"And now we are satisfied," cried the rest of the Vapours, as they poured into the rivers and were carried out into the Sea. "Have we not returned with a blessing and treasures in our hand?"

And thus, from age to age, ever since the primary mists went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground, the mighty work has gone on, and still continues its course. For not to inactivity and idleness did the Vapours now return, but only to recommence afresh their labours of love. Yes! evermore rejoicing on their way, through all varieties of accident, of climate, and of place, whether as Snow or Hail, as Showers or Dews, as Floods or Springs, as

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Rivers or as Seas, the waters are still obediently fulfilling His word that called them into being, and are carrying the everlasting Circle of Blessing round the world.

Oh, ye showers and dew ; oh, ye winds of God ; oh, ye ice and snow ; oh, ye seas and floods ; verily, even when man is mute and forgetful, ye bless the Lord, ye praise Him and magnify Him for ever!

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II.

A Lesson of Faith.

"If a man die, shall he live *again*? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."—Job xiv. 14.

"GET me hire you as a nurse for my poor children," said a Butterfly to a quiet Caterpillar, who was strolling along a cabbage-leaf in her odd, lumbering way. "See these little eggs," continued the Butterfly; "I don't know how long it will be before they come to life, and I feel very sick and poorly; and if I should die, who will take care of my baby butterflies when I am gone? Will *you*, kind, mild, green Caterpillar? But you must mind what you give them to eat, Caterpillar! —they cannot, of course, live on *your* rough food. You must give them early dew, and

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honey from the flowers; and you must let them fly about only a little way at first; for, of course, one can't expect them to use their wings properly all at once. Dear me! it is a sad pity you cannot fly yourself. But I have no time to look for another nurse now, so you will do your best, I hope. Dear! dear! I cannot think what made me come and lay my eggs on a cabbage-leaf! What a place for young butterflies to be born upon! Still you will be kind, will you not, to the poor little ones? Here, take this gold-dust from my wings as a reward. Oh, how dizzy I am! Caterpillar! you will remember about the food ——"

And with these words the Butterfly closed her eyes and died; and the green Caterpillar, who had not had the opportunity of even saying Yes or No to the request, was left standing alone by the side of the Butterfly's eggs.

"A pretty nurse she has chosen, indeed, poor lady!" exclaimed she, "and a pretty

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business I have in hand! Why, her senses must have left her, or she never would have asked a poor crawling creature like me to bring up her dainty little ones! Much they'll mind me, truly, when they feel the gay wings on their backs, and can fly away out of my sight whenever they choose! Ah! how silly some people are, in spite of their painted clothes and the gold-dust on their wings!"

However, the poor Butterfly was dead, and there lay the eggs on the cabbage-leaf; and the green Caterpillar had a kind heart, so she resolved to do her best. But she got no sleep that night, she was so very anxious. She made her back quite ache with walking all night long round her young charges, for fear any harm should happen to them; and in the morning says she to herself—

"Two heads are better than one. I will consult some wise animal upon the matter, and get advice. How should a poor crawling creature like me know what to do, without asking my betters?"

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But still there was a difficulty—whom should the Caterpillar consult? There was the shaggy Dog who sometimes came into the garden. But he was so rough—he would most likely whisk all the eggs off the cabbage-leaf with one brush of his tail, if she should call him near to talk to her, and then she should never forgive herself. There was the Tom Cat, to be sure, who would sometimes sit at the foot of the apple-tree, basking himself and warming his fur in the sunshine; but he was so selfish and indifferent!—there was no hope of his giving himself the trouble to think about butterflies' eggs. "I wonder which is the wisest of all the animals I know," sighed the Caterpillar, in great distress; and then she thought, and thought, till at last she thought of the Lark; and she fancied that because he went up so high, and nobody knew where he went to, he must be very clever, and know a great deal; for to go up very high (which *she* could never

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do) was the Caterpillar's idea of perfect glory.

Now, in the neighboring corn-field there lived a Lark, and the Caterpillar sent a message to him, to beg him to come and talk to her; and when he came she told him all her difficulties, and asked him what she was to do to feed and rear the little creatures, so different from herself.

"Perhaps you will be able to inquire and hear something about it next time you go up high," observed the Caterpillar, timidly.

The Lark said, "Perhaps he should;" but he did not satisfy her curiosity any further. Soon afterwards, however, he went singing upwards into the bright, blue sky. By degrees his voice died away in the distance, till the green Caterpillar could not hear a sound. It is nothing to say she could not see him; for, poor thing! she never could see far at any time, and had a difficulty in looking upwards at all, even when she reared herself up most carefully, which

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she did now; but it was of no use,—so she dropped upon her legs again, and resumed her walk round the Butterfly's eggs, nibbling a bit of the cabbage-leaf now and then as she moved along.

"What a time the Lark has been gone!" she cried, at last. "I wonder where he is, just now! I would give all my legs to know! He must have flown up higher than usual this time, I do think! How I should like to know where it is that he goes to, and what he hears in that curious blue sky! He always sings in going up and coming down, but he never lets any secret out. He is very, very close!"

And the green Caterpillar took another turn round the Butterfly's eggs.

At last the Lark's voice began to be heard again. The Caterpillar almost jumped for joy, and it was not long before she saw her friend descend with hushed note to the cabbage-bed.

"News, news, glorious news, friend Cat-

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erpillar!" sang the Lark; "but the worst of it is, you won't believe me!"

"I believe everything I am told," observed the Caterpillar, hastily.

"Well, then, first of all, I will tell you what these little creatures are to eat"—and the Lark nodded his beak towards the eggs. "What do you think it is to be? Guess!"

"Dew, and the honey out of flowers, I am afraid," sighed the Caterpillar.

"No such thing, old lady! Something simpler than that. Something that *you* can get at quite easily."

"I can get at nothing quite easily but cabbage-leaves," murmured the Caterpillar, in distress.

"Excellent! my good friend," cried the Lark, exultingly; "you have found it out. You are to feed them with cabbage-leaves."

"*Never!*" said the Caterpillar, indignantly. "It was their dying mother's last request that I should do no such thing."

"Their dying mother knew nothing about

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the matter," persisted the Lark; "but why do you ask me, and then disbelieve what I say? You have neither faith nor trust."

"Oh, I believe everything I am told," said the Caterpillar.

"Nay, but you do not," replied the Lark; "you won't believe me even about the food, and yet that is but a beginning of what I have to tell you. Why, Caterpillar, what do you think those little eggs will turn out to be?"

"Butterflies, to be sure," said the Caterpillar.

"*Caterpillars!*" sang the Lark; "and you'll find it out in time;" and the Lark flew away, for he did not want to stay and contest the point with his friend.

"I thought the Lark had been wise and kind," observed the mild, green Caterpillar, once more beginning to walk round the eggs, "but I find that he is foolish and saucy instead. Perhaps he went up *too* high this time. Ah, it's a pity when people who soar

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so high are silly and rude nevertheless! Dear! I still wonder whom he sees, and what he does up yonder."

"I would tell you, if you would believe me," sang the Lark, descending once more.

"I believe everything I am told," reïterated the Caterpillar, with as grave a face as if it were a fact.

"Then I'll tell you something else," cried the Lark; "for the best of my news remains behind. *You will one day be a Butterfly yourself.*"

"Wretched bird!" exclaimed the Caterpillar, "you jest with my inferiority—now you are cruel as well as foolish. Go away! I will ask your advice no more."

"I told you you would not believe me," cried the Lark, nettled in his turn.

"I believe everything that I am told," persisted the Caterpillar; "that is"—and she hesitated,—"everything that it is *reasonable* to believe. But to tell me that butterflies' eggs are caterpillars, and that cater-

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pillars leave off crawling and get wings, and become butterflies!——Lark! you are too wise to believe such nonsense yourself, for you know it is impossible."

"I know no such thing," said the Lark, warmly. "Whether I hover over the cornfields of earth, or go up into the depths of the sky, I see so many wonderful things, I know no reason why there should not be more. Oh, Caterpillar! it is because you crawl, because you never get beyond your cabbage-leaf, that you call *any* thing *impossible.*

"Nonsense!" shouted the Caterpillar; "I know what's possible, and what's not possible, according to my experience and capacity, as well as you do. Look at my long green body and these endless legs, and then talk to me about having wings and a painted, feathery coat! Fool!——"

"And fool you! you would-be-wise Caterpillar!" cried the indignant Lark. "Fool, to attempt to reason about what you cannot

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understand! Do you not hear how my song swells with rejoicing as I soar upwards to the mysterious wonder-world above? Oh, Caterpillar! what comes to you from there, receive, as *I* do, upon trust."

"That is what you call——"

"*Faith*," interrupted the Lark.

"How am I to learn Faith?" asked the Caterpillar—

At that moment she felt something at her side. She looked round—eight or ten little green caterpillars were moving about, and had already made a show of a hole in the cabbage-leaf. They had broken from the Butterfly's eggs!

Shame and amazement filled our green friend's heart, but joy soon followed; for, as the first wonder was possible, the second might be so too. "Teach me your lesson, Lark!" she would say; and the Lark sang to her of the wonders of the earth below, and of the heaven above. And the Caterpillar talked all the rest of her life, to her

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relations, of the time when she should be a Butterfly.

But none of them believed her. She nevertheless had learnt the Lark's lesson of faith, and when she was going into her chrysalis grave, she said—"I shall be a butterfly some day!"

But her relations thought her head was wandering, and they said, "Poor thing!"

And when she was a Butterfly, and was going to die again, she said—

"I have known many wonders—I have faith—I can trust even now for what shall come next!"

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III.

The Law of Authority and Obedience.

"Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"
Acts vii. 27.

A FINE young Working-bee left his hive, one lovely summer's morning, to gather honey from the flowers. The sun shone so brightly, and the air felt so warm, that he flew a long, long distance, till he came to some gardens that were very beautiful and gay; and there, having roamed about, in and out of the flowers, buzzing in great delight, till he had so loaded himself with treasures that he could carry no more, he bethought himself of returning home. But, just as he was beginning his journey, he accidentally flew through the open window of a country house, and

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found himself in a large dining-room. There was a great deal of noise and confusion, for it was dinner-time, and the guests were talking rather loudly, so that the Bee got quite frightened. Still he tried to taste some rich sweetmeats that lay temptingly in a dish on the table, when all at once he heard a child exclaim with a shout, "Oh, there's a bee; let me catch him!" on which he rushed hastily back to (as he thought) the open air. But, alas! poor fellow, in another second he found that he had flung himself against a hard, transparent wall! In other words, he had flown against the glass panes of the window, being quite unable, in his alarm and confusion, to distinguish the glass from the opening by which he had entered. This unexpected blow annoyed him much; and having wearied himself in vain attempts to find the entrance he began to walk slowly and quietly up and down the wooden frame at the bottom of the panes, hoping to recover both his strength and composure.

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Presently, as he was walking along, his attention was attracted by hearing the soft, half-whispering voices of two children, who were kneeling down and looking at him.

Says the one to the other, "This is a working-bee, Sister; I see the wax-bags under his thighs. Nice fellow! how busy he has been!"

"Does he make the wax and honey himself?" whispered the Girl.

"Yes, he gets them from the insides of the flowers. Don't you remember how we watched the bees once dodging in and out of the crocuses, how we laughed at them, they were so busy and fussy, and their dark coats looked so handsome against the yellow leaves? I wish I had seen this fellow loading himself to-day. But he does more than that. He builds the honeycomb, and does pretty nearly everything. He's a working-bee, poor wretch!"

"What is a working-bee? and why do you call him Poor wretch,' Brother?"

"Why don't you know, Uncle Collins

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says all people are poor wretches who work for other people who don't work for themselves? And that is just what this bee does. There is the queen-bee in the hive, who does nothing at all but sit at home, give orders, and coddle the little ones; and all the bees wait upon her, and obey her. Then there are the drones—lazy fellows, who lounge all their time away. And then there are the working-bees, like this one here, and they do all the work for everybody. How Uncle Collins would laugh at them, if he knew!"

"Doesn't Uncle Collins know about bees?"

"No, I think not. It was the gardener who told me. And, besides, I think Uncle Collins would never have done talking about them and quizzing them, if he once knew they couldn't do without a queen. I heard him say, yesterday, that kings and queens were against nature, for that nature never makes one man a king and another man a cobbler, but makes them all alike; and so, he says, kings and queens are very unjust things."

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"Bees have not the sense to know anything about that," observed the little Girl, softly.

"Of course not! Only fancy how angry these working fellows would be, if they knew what the gardener told me!"

"What was that?"

"Why, that the working-bees are just the same as the queen when they are first born, just exactly the same, and that it is only the food that is given them, and the shape of the house they live in, that makes the difference. The bee-nurses manage that; they give some one sort of food, and some another, and they make the cells different shapes; and so some turn out queens, and the rest working-bees. It's just what Uncle Collins says about kings and cobblers—nature makes them all alike. But, look! the dinner's over; we must go."

"Wait till I let the Bee out, Brother," said the little Girl, taking him gently up in a soft handkerchief; and then she looked at him kindly, and said, "Poor fellow! so you

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might have been a queen if they had only given you the right food, and put you into a right-shaped house! What a shame they didn't! As it is, my good friend," (and here her voice took a childish, mocking tone)— "As it is, my good friend, you must go and drudge away all your life long, making honey and wax. Well, get along with you! Good luck to your labours!" And with these words she fluttered her handkerchief through the open window, and the Bee found himself once more floating in the air.

Oh, what a fine evening it was! But the liberated Bee did not think so. The sun still shone beautifully, though lower in the sky; and though the light was softer, and the shadows were longer; and as to the flowers, they were more fragrant than ever; yet the poor Bee felt as if there were a dark, heavy cloud over the sky; but in reality the cloud was over his own heart, for he had become discontented and ambitious, and he rebelled

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against the authority under which he had been born.

At last he reached his home—the hive which he had left with such a happy heart in the morning—and, after dashing in, in a hurried and angry manner, he began to unload the bags under his thighs of their precious contents, and as he did so he exclaimed, "I am the most wretched of creatures!"

"What is the matter? what have you done?" cried an old Relation who was at work near him; "have you been eating the poisonous kalmia flowers, or have you discovered that the mischievous honey-moth has laid her eggs in our combs?"

"Oh, neither, neither!" answered the Bee, impatiently; "only I have travelled a long way, and have heard a great deal about myself that I never knew before, and I know now that we are a set of wretched creatures!"

"And, pray, what wise animal has been

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persuading you of that, against your own experience?" asked the old Relation.

"I have learnt *a truth*," answered the Bee, in an indignant tone, "and it matters not who taught it me."

"Certainly not; but it matters very much that you should not fancy yourself wretched merely because some foolish creature has told you you are so; you know very well that you never *were* wretched till you were told you were so. I call that very silly; but I shall say no more to you." And the old Relation turned himself round to his work, singing very pleasantly all the time.

But the Traveller-bee would not be laughed out of his wretchedness: so he collected some of his young companions around him, and told them what he had heard in the large dining-room of the country-house; and all were astonished, and most of them vexed. Then he grew so much pleased at finding himself able to create such excitement and interest, that he became sillier every minute,

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and made a long speech on the injustice of there being such things as queens, and talked of nature making them all equal and alike, with an energy that would have delighted Uncle Collins himself.

When the Bee had finished his speech, there was first a silence, and then a few buzzes of anger, and then a murmured expression of plans and wishes. It must be admitted their ideas of how to remedy the evil now for the first time suggested to them were very confused. Some wished Uncle Collins could come and manage all the beehives in the country, for they were sure he would let *all* the bees be queens, and then what a jolly time they should have! And when the old Relation popped his head round the corner of the cell he was building, just to inquire, "What would be the fun of being queens, if there were no working-bees to wait on one?" the little coterie of rebels buzzed very loud, and told him he was a fool, for of course Uncle Collins would take care

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that the tyrant who had so long been queen, and the royal children, now ripening in their nurse-cells, should be made to wait on them while they lasted.

"And when they are finished?" persisted the old Relation, with a laugh.

"Buzz, buzz," was the answer; and the old Relation held his tongue.

Then another Bee suggested that it would, after all, be very awkward for them all to be queens; for who would make the honey and wax, and build the honeycombs, and nurse the children? Would it not be best, therefore, that there should be no queens whatever, but that they should all be working-bees?

But then the tiresome old Relation popped his head round the corner again, and said, he did not quite see how that change would benefit them, for were they not all working-bees already?—on which an indignant buzz was poured into his ear, and he retreated again to his work.

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It was well that night at last came on, and the time arrived when the labours of the day were over, and sleep and silence must reign in the hive. With the dawn of the morning, however, the troubled thoughts unluckily returned, and the Traveller-bee and his companions kept occasionally clustering together in little groups, to talk over their wrongs and a remedy. Meantime, the rest of the hive were too busy to pay much attention to them, and so their idleness was not detected. But, at last, a few hot-headed youngsters grew so violent in their different opinions, that they lost all self-control, and a noisy quarrel would have broken out, but that the Traveller-bee flew to them, and suggested that, as they were grown up now, and could not all be turned into queens, they had best sally forth and try the republican experiment of all being working-bees without any queen whatever. With so charming an idea in view, he easily persuaded them to leave the hive; and a very nice swarm they looked as

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they emerged into the open air, and dispersed about the garden to enjoy the early breeze. But a swarm of bees, without a queen to lead them, proved only a helpless crowd, after all. The first thing they attempted, when they had re-collected to consult, was, to fix on the sort of place in which they should settle for a home.

"A garden, of course," says one. "A field," says another. "There is nothing like a hollow tree," remarked a third. "The roof of a good outhouse is best protected from wet," thought a fourth. "The branch of a tree leaves us most at liberty," cried a fifth. "I won't give up to anybody," shouted all.

They were in a prosperous way to settle, were they not?

"I am very angry with you," cried the Traveller-bee, at last; "half the morning is gone already, and here we are as unsettled as when we left the hive!"

"One would think you were going to be

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queen over us, to hear you talk," exclaimed the disputants. "If we choose to spend our time in quarrelling, what is that to you? Go and do as you please yourself!"

And he did; for he was ashamed and unhappy; and he flew to the further extremity of the garden to hide his vexation; where, seeing a clump of beautiful jonquils, he dived at once into a flower to soothe himself by honey-gathering. Oh, how he enjoyed it! He loved the flowers and the honey-gathering more than ever, and began his accustomed murmur of delight, and had serious thoughts of going back at once to the hive as usual, when, as he was coming out of one of the golden cups, he met his old Relation coming out of another.

"Who would have thought to find you here alone?" said the old Relation. "Where are your companions?"

"I scarcely know; I left them outside the garden."

"What are they doing?

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". . . Quarrelling . . ." murmured the Traveller-bee.

"What about?"

"What they are to do."

"What a pleasant occupation for bees on a sunshiny morning!" said the old Relation, with a sly expression.

"Don't laugh at me, but tell me what to do," said the puzzled Traveller. "What Uncle Collins says about nature and our all being alike, sounds very true, and yet somehow we do nothing but quarrel when we try to be all alike and equal."

"How old are you?" asked the old Relation.

"Seven days," answered the Traveller, in all the sauciness of youth and strength.

"And how old am I?"

"Many months, I am afraid."

"You are right, I am an oldish bee. Now, my dear friend, let us fight!"

"Not for the world. I am the stronger, and should hurt you."

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"I wonder what makes you ask advice of a creature so much weaker than yourself?"

"Oh, what can your weakness have to do with your wisdom, my good old Relation? I consult you because I know you are wise; and I am humbled myself, and feel that I am foolish."

"Old and young—strong and weak—wise and foolish—what has become of our being alike and equal? But never mind, we can manage. Now let us agree to live together."

"With all my heart. But where shall we live?"

"Tell me first which of us is to decide, if we differ in opinion?"

"*You* shall; for you are wise."

"Good! And who shall collect honey for food?"

"*I* will; for I am strong."

"Very well; and now you have made me a queen, and yourself a working-bee! Ah! you foolish fellow, won't the old home and the old queen do? Don't you see that if even

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two people live together, there must be a head to lead and hands to follow? How much more in the case of a multitude!"

Gay was the song of the Traveller-bee as he wheeled over the flowers, joyously assenting to the truth of what he heard.

"Now to my companions," he cried, at last. And the two flew away together and sought the knot of discontented youngsters outside the garden wall.

They were still quarrelling, but no energy was left them. They were hungry and confused, and many had already flown away, to work and go home as usual.

And very soon afterwards a cluster of happy, buzzing bees, headed by the old Relation and the Traveller, were seen returning with wax-laden thighs to their hive.

As they were going to enter, they were stopped by one of the little sentinels who watch the doorway.

"Wait," cried he; "a royal corpse is passing out!"

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And so it was;—a dead queen soon appeared in sight, dragged along by working-bees on each side who, having borne her to the edge of the hive-stand, threw her over for interment.

"How is this? what has happened?" asked the Traveller-bee, in a tone of deep anxiety and emotion: "Surely our queen is not dead?"

"Oh, no!" answered the sentinel; "but there has been some accidental confusion in the hive this morning. Some of the cell-keepers were unluckily absent, and a young queen-bee burst through her cell, which ought to have been blocked up for a few days longer. Of course the two queens fought till one was dead; and, of course, the weaker one was killed. We shall not be able to send off a swarm quite so soon as usual this year; but these accidents can't be helped."

"But this one might have been helped," thought the Traveller-bee to himself, as with a pang of remorse he remembered that he had

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been the cause of the mischievous confusion.

"You see," buzzed the old Relation, nudging up against him,—"You see even *queens are not equal!* and that there can be but one ruler at once!"

And the Traveller-bee murmured a heart-wrung "Yes."

—And thus the instincts of nature confirm the reasoning conclusions of man.

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IV.

The Unknown Land.

"But now they desire a better country."
HEBREWS xi. 16.

IT mattered not to the Sedge Warbler whether it were night or day!

She built her nest down among the willows, and reeds, and long, thick herbage that bordered the great river's side, and in her sheltered covert she sang songs of mirth and rejoicing both by day and night.

"Where does the great river go to?" asked the little ones, as they peered out of their nest one lovely summer night, and saw the moonbeams dancing on the waters, as they hurried along. Now, the Sedge Warbler could not tell her children where the great

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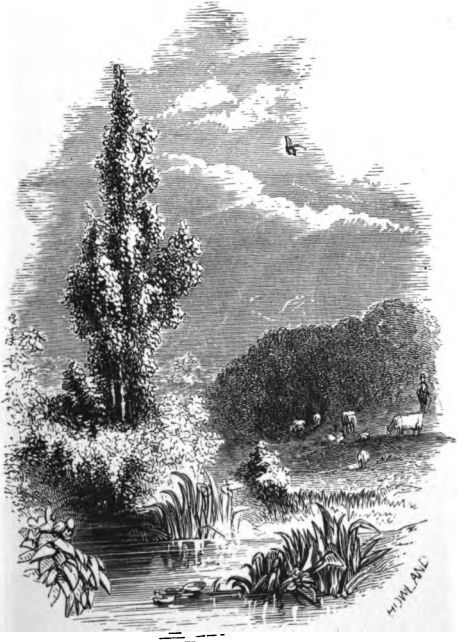

[THE SEDGE WARBLER'S NEST.]

THE UNKNOWN LAND.

Circle of Blessing. p. 70.

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river went to; so she laughed, and said they must ask the Sparrow who chattered so fast, or the Swallow who travelled so far, next time one or the other came to perch on the willow-tree to rest. "And then," said she, "you will hear all such stories as these!"—and thereupon the Sedge Warbler tuned her voice to the Sparrow's note, and the little ones almost thought the Sparrow was there, the song was so like his—all about towns, and houses, and gardens, and fruit-trees, and cats, and guns; only the Sedge Warbler made the account quite confused, for she had never had the patience to sit and listen to the Sparrow so as really to understand what he said about these matters.

But imperfect as the tale was, it amused the little ones very much, and they tried then to sing like it, and sang till they fell asleep; and when they awoke they burst into singing again; for, behold! the eastern sky was red with the dawn, and they knew the warm sunbeams would soon send beautiful streaks

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of light in among the reeds and flags that sheltered their happy home.

Now, the Mother-bird would sometimes leave the little ones below, and go up into the willow-branches to sing alone; and as the season advanced she did this oftener and oftener; and her song was plaintive and tender, then, for she used to sing to the tide of the river, as it swept along she knew not whither, and think that some day she and her husband and children should all be hurrying so onward as the river hurried,—she knew not whither also,—to the Unknown Land whence she had come. Yes! I may call it the Unknown Land; for only faint images remained upon her mind of the country whence she had flown.

At first she used to sing these ditties only when alone; but by degrees she began to let her little ones hear them, now and then,—for were they not going to accompany her? and was it not as well, therefore, to accustom them gradually to think about it?

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Then the little ones asked her where the said Unknown Land was. But she smiled and she could not tell them, for she did not know.

"Perhaps the great river is travelling there all along," thought the eldest child. But he was wrong. The great river was rolling on hurriedly to a mighty city, where it was to stream through the arches of many bridges, and bear on its bosom the traffic of many nations; restless and crowded by day; gloomy, dark, and dangerous by night! Ah! what a contrast were the day and night of the mighty city, to the day and night of the Sedge Warbler's home, where the twenty-four hours of changes God has appointed to nature were but so many changes of beauty!

"Mother, why do you sing songs about another land?" asked a young, tender-hearted fledgling one day. "Why should we leave the reed-beds and the willow-trees? Can not we all build nests here, and live here always? Mother, do not let us go away anywhere else. I want no other land, and no other home but

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this. There are all the aits in the great river to choose from, where we shall each settle; there can be nothing in the Unknown Land more pleasant than the reed-beds and the willow-trees here. I am so happy!—Leave off those dreadful songs!"

Then the Mother's breast heaved with many a varied thought, and she made no reply. So the little one went on,—

"Think of the red glow in the morning sky, Mother, and the soft haze—and then the beautiful rays of warm light across the waters! Think of the grand noonday glare, when the broad flags and reeds are all burnished over with heat. Think of these evenings, Mother, when we can sit about in the branches—here, there, anywhere—and watch the great sun go down behind the sky; or fly to the aits of the great river, and sing in the long green herbage there; and then come home by moonlight, and sing till we fall asleep; and wake singing again, if any noise disturb us, if a boat chance to paddle by, or

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some of those strange bright lights shoot up with a noise into the sky from distant gardens. Think, even when the rain comes down, how we enjoy ourselves; for then how sweet it is to huddle into the soft warm nest together, and listen to the drops pattering upon the flags and leaves overhead! Oh! I love this dear, dear home so much!—Sing those dreadful songs about another land no more!"

Then the Mother said—

"Listen to me, my child, and I will sing you another song."

And the Sedge Warbler changed her note, and sang to her tender little one of her own young days, when she was as happy and as gay as now, though not here among the reed-beds; and how, after she had lived and rejoiced in her happiness many pleasant months, a voice seemed to rise within her that said—"*This is not your Rest!*" and how she wondered, and tried not to listen, and tried to stop where she was, and be happy there still.

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But the voice came oftener and oftener, and louder and louder; and how the dear partner she had chosen heard and felt the same; and how at last they left their home together, and came and settled down among the reed-beds of the great river; and oh! how happy she had been!

"And where is the place you came from, Mother?" asked the little one. "Is it anywhere near, that we may go and see it?"

"My child," answered the Sedge Warbler, "it is the Unknown Land! Far, far away, I know; but *where*, I do not know. Only the voice that called me thence is beginning to call again. And, as I was obedient and hopeful once, shall I be less obedient and hopeful now—now that I have been so happy? No, my little one; let us go forth to the Unknown Land, wherever it may be, in joyful trust.

"*You* will be with me; so I will," murmured the little Sedge Warbler in reply; and before she went to sleep she joined her

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young voice with her mother's in the Song of the Unknown Land.

One day afterwards, when the parent birds had gone off to the sedgy banks of a neighbouring stream, another of the young ones flew to the topmost branches of some willow-trees, and, delighted with his position, began to sing merrily, as he swung backwards and forwards on a bough. Many were the songs he tried, and well enough he succeeded, for his age; and at last he tried the song of the Unknown Land.

"A pretty tune, and a pretty voice, and a pretty singer!" remarked a Magpie, who unluckily was crossing the country at the time, and whose mischievous spirit made him stop to amuse himself by showing off to the young one his superior wisdom, as he thought it.

"I have been in many places, and even once was domesticated about the house of a human creature, so that I am a pretty good judge of singing," continued Mr. Mag, with a cock of his tail, as he balanced himself on

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a branch near the Sedge Warbler; "but, upon my word, I have seldom heard a prettier song than yours—only I wish you would tell me what it is all about."

"It is about the Unknown Land," answered the young Warbler, with modest pleasure, and very innocently.

"Do I hear you right, my little friend?" inquired the Magpie, with mock solemnity—"The *Unknown* Land, did you say? Dear, dear! to think of finding such abstruse philosophy among the marshes and ditches! It is quite a treat! And pray, now, what is there that you can tell an old fellow like me, who am always anxious to improve myself, about this Unknown Land?"

"I don't know, except that we are going there some day," answered the Sedge Warbler, rather confused by the Magpie's manner.

"Now, that is excellent!" returned the Magpie, chuckling with laughter. "How I love simplicity! and, really, you are a choice specimen of it, Mr. Sedge Warbler. So you

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are thinking of a journey to this Unknown Land, always supposing, of course, my sweet little friend, that you can find the way to it, which, between you and me, I think there must naturally be some doubt about, under the circumstances of the place itself being unknown! Good evening to you, pretty Mr. Sedge Warbler. I wish you a pleasant journey!"

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried the young bird, now quite distressed by the Magpie's ridicule; "don't go just yet, pray. Tell me what you think yourself about the Unknown Land."

"Oh, you little wiseacre, are you laughing at me? Why, what can *any*body, even so clever a creature as yourself, *think* about an *unknown* thing? You can *guess*, I admit, anything you please about it, and so could I, if I thought it worth while to waste my time so foolishly. But you will never get beyond *guessing* in such a case—at all events, I con-

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fess *my* poor abilities can't pretend to do anything more."

"Then you are not going there yourself?" murmured the overpowered youngster.

"Certainly not. In the first place, I am quite contented where I am; and, in the second place, I am not quite so easy of belief as you seem to be. How do I know there is such a place as this Unknown Land at all?"

"My father and mother told me that," answered the Sedge Warbler, with more confidence.

"Oh, your father and mother told you, did they?" sneered the Magpie, scornfully. "And you're a good little bird, and believe everything your father and mother tell you. And if they were to tell you you were going to live up in the moon, you would believe them, I suppose?"

"They never deceived me yet!" cried the young Sedge Warbler, firmly, his feathers ruffling with indignation as he spoke.

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"Hoity, toity! what's the matter now, my dainty little cock? Who said your father and mother *had* ever deceived you? But, without being a bit *deceitful*, I take the liberty to inform you that they may be extremely *ignorant*. And I shall leave you to decide which of the two, yourself; for, I declare, one gets nothing but annoyance by trying to be good-natured to you countrified young fellows. You are not fit to converse with a bird of any experience and wisdom. So, once for all, good-bye to you!"

And the Magpie flapped his wings, and was gone before the Sedge Warbler had half recovered from his fit of vexation.

There was a decided change in the weather that evening, for the summer was now far advanced, and a sudden storm had brought cooler breezes and more rain than usual; and the young birds wondered, and were sad, when they saw the dark sky, and the swollen river and felt that there was no warm sun-

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shine to dry the wet, as was usual after a mid-day shower.

"Why is the sky so cloudy and lowering and why is the river so thick and gloomy and why is there no sunshine, I wonder?" says one.

"The sun will shine again to-morrow, I dare say," was the mother's answer; "but the days are shortening fast, and the storm has made this one very short; and the sun will not get through the clouds this evening. Never mind! the wet has not hurt the inside of our nest. Get into it my dear ones, and keep warm, while I sing to you about our journey. Silly children, did you expect the sunshine to last here forever?"

"I hoped it might, and thought it would, once, but lately I have seen a change," answered the young one who had talked to her mother so much before. "And I do not mind now, Mother. When the sunshine goes, and the wet comes, and the river looks dark and

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the sky black, I think about the Unknown Land."

Then the Mother was pleased, and, perched upon a tall flag outside the nest, she sang a hopeful song of the Unknown Land; and the father and children joined—all but *one!* He, poor fellow, would not, could not sing; but when the voices ceased, he murmured to his brothers and sisters in the nest—

"This would be all very pleasant and nice, if we could *know* anything about the Land we talk about."

"If we were to know too much, perhaps we should never be satisfied here," laughed the tender little one, who had formerly been so much distressed about going.

"But we know *nothing*," rejoined the other bird; "indeed, how do we know there is such a place as the Unknown Land at all?"

"We *feel* that there is, at any rate," answered the Sister-bird. "*I* have heard the call our mother tells about, and so must *you* have done."

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"You fancy you have heard it, that is to say," cried the Brother; "because she told you. It is all fancy, all guess-work; no knowledge! I could fancy I heard it too, only I will not be so weak and silly; I will neither think about going, nor will I go."

"*This is not your Rest,*" sang the Mother, in a loud, clear voice, outside; and "*This is not your Rest,*" echoed the others in sweet unison; and "*This is not your Rest,*" sounded in the depths of the poor little Sedge Warbler's own heart.

"This is not our Rest!" repeated the Mother. "The river is rushing forward; the clouds are hurrying onward; the winds are sweeping past, because here is not their Rest. Ask the river, ask the clouds, ask the winds where they go to:—Another Land! Ask the great sun, as he descends away out of sight, where he goes to:—Another Land! And when the appointed time shall come, let us also arise and go hence."

"O Mother, Mother, would that I could

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believe you! Where is that other Land?" Thus cried the distressed doubter in the nest. And then he opened his troubled heart, and told what the Magpie had said, and the parent birds listened in silence; and when he ceased—

"Listen to me, my son," exclaimed the Mother, "and I will sing you another song."

Whereupon she spoke once more of the land she had left before; but now the burden of her story was, that she had left it *without knowing why*. She "went out not knowing whither,"—in blind obedience, faith, and hope. As she traversed the wide waste of waters, there was no one to give her *reasons* for her flight, or tell her, "This and this will be your lot." Could the Magpie have told her, had he met her there? But had she been deceived? No! The secret voice which had called and led her forth, had been one of Kindness. When she came to the reed-beds she knew all about it. For then arose the strong desire to settle. Then she and

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her dear partner lived together. And then came the thought that she must build a nest. Ah! had the Magpie seen her then, building a home for children yet unborn, how he would have mocked at her! What could she *know*, he would have asked, about the future? Was it not all *guess-work*, fancy, folly? But had she been deceived? No! It was that voice of Kindness that had told her what to do. For did she not become the happy mother of children? And was she not now able to comfort and advise her little ones in their troubles? For, let the Magpie say what he would, was it likely that the voice of Kindness would deceive them at last? "No!" cried she; "in joyful trust let us obey the call, though now we know not why. When obedience and faith are made perfect, it may be that knowledge and explanation shall be given." So ended the Mother's strain, and no sad misgivings ever clouded the Sedge Warbler's home again.

Several weeks of changing autumn weather

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followed after this, and the chilly mornings and evenings caused the songs of departure to sound louder and more cheerily than ever in the reed-beds. They knew, they felt, they had confidence, that there was joy for them in the Unknown Land. But one dark morning, when all were busy in various directions, a sudden loud sound startled the young ones from their sports, and in terror and confusion they hurried home. The old nest looked looser and more untidy than ever that day, for some water had oozed in through the half-worn bottom. But they huddled together into it, as of old, for safety. Soon, however, it was discovered that neither Father nor Mother was there; and after waiting in vain some time for their return, the frightened young ones flew off again to seek them.

Oh! weary, weary search for the missing ones we love! It may be doubted whether the sad reality, when they came upon it, exceeded the agony of that hour's suspense.

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It ended, however, at last! On a patch of long rank herbage which covered a mud bank, so wet that the cruel sportsman could not follow to secure his prey, lay the stricken parent birds. One was already dead; but the mother still lived, and as her children's wail of sorrow sounded in her ear, she murmured out a last gentle strain of hope and comfort.

"Away, away, my darlings, to the Unknown Land. The voice that has called to all our race before, and never but for kindness, is calling to you now. Obey! Go forth in joyful trust! Quick! Quick! There's no time to be lost!"

"But my Father—you—oh, my Mother!" cried the young ones.

"Hush, sweet ones, hush! We cannot be with you *there*. But there may be some other Unknown Land which *this* may lead to;" and the Mother laid her head against her wounded side and died.

Long before the sunbeams could pierce the

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heavy haze of the next autumn morning, the young Sedge Warblers rose for the last time o'er their much-loved reed-beds, and took flight—" they knew not whither."

Dim and undefined hope, perhaps they had, that they might find their parents again in the Unknown Land. And if one pang of grief struck them when these hopes ended, it was but for a moment; for said the Brother-bird—

"There *may* be some other Unknown Land, better even than this, to which they may be gone."

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V.

Knowledge not the Limit of Belief.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

ZOÖPHYTES AND CORALLINES.

ALMOST everybody knows what a sea-weed is, but many people may not know that the graceful buff-coloured pieces they pick up among their favourite pink and green specimens are not really sea-weeds, or any sort of *plants*, but *animal creatures*, which are known among Naturalists by the name of ZOÖPHYTES.

They look so like plants, however, to the naked eye, that they were always supposed to be so, until, by being examined through a microscope, it was discovered that these so-

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called plants were covered over with cells, in which tiny live creatures were fixed, and from which they were seen to put out feelers for the purpose of catching prey for food.

But as the tiny creatures (called Polypes) cannot leave their cell-like homes, a Zoöphyte may well be called a compound animal. It is like a shrub, only with animal instead of vegetable sap in all its branches, and a living creature growing in every bud.

CORALLINES are the common lilac-coloured sea-weeds, with a hard limy coating, which are picked up on all our shores, and are well known by sight, if not by name, to all sea-weed gatherers.

The only curious part of their history is, that for more than half a century they were supposed to be animals! This strange mistake was originated by the same distinguished Naturalist, Mr. John Ellis, a London merchant, who first asserted in England the animal nature of the Zoöphytes. And as his statements about them proved to be no less

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true than interesting, people took for granted the correctness of what he said about the Corallines. But, within the last few years, Ellis' mistake began to be suspected; and one of the most eminent observers of our own day, Dr. Johnston, of Berwick, published in 1842 a "History of British Sponges and Lithophytes," in which this question was set at rest forever, and their vegetable nature was proved by the results of the closest examination and the most conclusive experiments.

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Knowledge not the Limit of Belief.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?"
JOB xi. 7.

IT was but the banging of the door, blown to by a current of wind from the open window, that made that great noise, and shook the room so much!

The room was a Naturalist's library, and it was a pity that some folio books of specimens had been left so near the edge of the great table,—for, when the door clapt to, they fell down, and many plants, seaweeds, &c., were scattered on the floor.

And, "Do we meet once again?" said a Zoöphyte to a Seaweed (a *Coralline*) in whose company he had been thrown ashore,—"Do we meet once again? This is a real pleasure. What strange adventures we have

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gone through since the waves flung us on the sands together!"

"Ay, indeed," replied the Seaweed, "and what a queer place we have come to at last! Well, well—but let me first ask you how you are this morning, after all the washing, and drying, and squeezing, and gumming, we have undergone?"

"Oh, pretty well in health, Seaweed, but very, very sad. You know there is a great difference between you and me. You have little or no cause to be sad. You are just the same now that you ever were, excepting that you can never grow any more. But *I!* ah, I am only the skeleton of what I once was! All the merry little creatures that inhabited me are dead and dried up. They died by hundreds at a time, soon after I left the sea; and even if they had survived longer, the nasty fresh water we were soaked in by the horrid being who picked us up, would have killed them at once. What are you smiling at?"

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"I am smiling," said the Seaweed, "at your calling our new master a horrid being, and also at your speaking so positively about the little creatures that inhabited you."

"And why may I not speak positively of what I know so well?" asked the other.

"Oh, of what you *know*, Zoöphyte, by all means! But I wonder what we *do* know! People get very obstinate over what they think they know, and then, lo and behold! it turns out to be a mistake."

"What makes you say this?" inquired the Zoöphyte; and the Seaweed answered, "I have learnt it from a very curious creature I have made acquaintance with here—a Bookworm. He walks through all the books in this library just as he pleases, and picks up a quantity of information, and knows a great deal. And he's a mere nothing, he says, compared to the creature who picked us up —the 'horrid being,' as you call him. Why, my dear friend, the Bookworm tells me that he who found us is a man, and that a man is

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the most wonderful creature in all the world; that there is nothing in the least like him. And this particular one here is a Naturalist; that is, he knows all about living creatures, and plants, and stones, and I don't know what besides. Now, wouldn't you say that it was a great honour to belong to him, and to have made acquaintance with his friend the Bookworm?"

"Of course I should, and do—" the Zoöphyte replied.

"Very well," continued his companion, "I know you would; and yet I can tell you that this Naturalist and his Bookworm are just instances of what I have been saying. They fancy that betwixt them they know nearly everything, and get as obstinate as possible over the most ridiculous mistakes."

"My good friend Seaweed, are you a competent judge in such matters as these?"

"Oh, am I not!" the Seaweed rejoined. "Why now, for instance, what do you think the Book-worm and I have been quarrelling

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about half the morning? Actually as to whether *I* am an animal or a vegetable. He declares that I am an animal full of little living creatures like yours, and that there is a long account of all this written on the page opposite the one on which I am gummed!"

"Of all the nonsense I ever listened to!" began the Zoöphyte, angrily, yet amused—but he was interrupted by the Seaweed—

"And as for *you*—I am almost ashamed to tell you—that you and all your family and connections were, for generations and generations, considered as vegetables. It is only lately that these Naturalists found out that you were an animal. May I not well say that people get very obstinate about what they think they know, and after all it turns out to be a mistake? As for me, I am quite confused with these blunders."

"Oh dear, how disappointed I am!" murmured the Zoöphyte. "I thought we had really fallen into the hands of some very interesting creatures. I am very, very sorry!

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It seemed so nice that there should be wonderful, wise beings, who spend their time in finding out all about animals, and plants, and such things, and keep us all in these beautiful books so carefully. I liked it so much, and now I find the wonderfully wise creatures are wonderfully stupid ones instead."

"Very much so," laughed the Seaweed, "though our learned friend, the Bookworm, would tell you quite otherwise; but he gets quite muddled when he talks about them, poor fellow!"

"It is very easy to ridicule your betters," said a strange voice; and the Bookworm, who had just then eaten his way through the back of Lord Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, appeared sitting outside, listening to the conversation. "I shall be sorry that I have told you anything, if you make such a bad use of the little bit of knowledge you have acquired."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, dear friend!" cried the Seaweed "I meant no harm. You

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see it is quite new to us to learn anything; and, really, if I laughed, you must excuse me. I meant no harm—only I *do* happen to know—really for a fact—that I never was alive with little creatures like my friend the Zoöphyte, and he happens to know—really for a fact—that he never was a vegetable, and so you see it made us smile to think of your wonderful creature, man, making such wonderfully odd mistakes."

At this the Bookworm smiled; but he soon shook his head gravely, and said—"All the mistakes man makes, man can discover and correct—I mean, of course, all the mistakes he makes about creatures inferior to himself, whom he learns to know from his own observation. He may not observe quite carefully enough one day, but he may put all right when he looks next time. I never give up a statement when I know it is true: and so I tell you again—laugh as much as you please—that, in spite of all his mistakes, man is, without exception, the most wonderful and

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the most clever of all the creatures upon earth!"

"You will be a clever creature yourself if you can prove it!" cried both the Zoöphyte and Seaweed at once.

"The idea of taking me with my hundreds of living inhabitants for a vegetable!" sneered the Zoöphyte.

"And me with my vegetable inside, covered over with lime, for an animal!" smiled the Seaweed.

Bookworm. "Ah! have your laugh out, and then listen. But, my good friends, if you had worked your way through as many wise books as I have done, you would laugh less and know more."

Zoöphyte. "Nay, don't be angry, Bookworm."

Bookworm. "Oh, I'm not angry a bit. I know too well the cause of all the folly you are talking, so I excuse you. And I am now puzzling my head to find out how I am to prove what I have said about the superi-

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ority of man, so as to make you understand it."

Seaweed. "Then you admit there is a little difficulty in proving it? Even *you* confess it to be rather puzzling."

Bookworm. "I do; but the difficulty does not lie where you think it does. I am sorry to say it—but the only thing that prevents your *understanding* the superiority of man is, your own immeasurable inferiority to him! However many mistakes he may make about *you*, he can correct them all by a little closer or more patient observation. But no observation can make you understand what man is. *You* are quite within the grasp of *his* powers, but *he* is quite beyond the reach of *yours*."

Seaweed. "You are not over-civil, with all your learning, Mr. Bookworm."

Bookworm. "I do not mean to be rude, I assure you. You are both of you very beautiful creatures, and, I dare say, very useful, too. But you should not fancy either that you *do* know everything, or that you are *able* to

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know everything. And, above all, you should not dispute the superiority and powers of another creature merely because you cannot understand them."

Seaweed. "And am I then to believe all the long stories anybody may choose to come and tell me, about the wonderful powers of other creatures?—and, when I inquire what those wonderful powers are, am I to be told that I can't understand them, but am to believe them all the same as if I did?"

Bookworm. "Certainly not, unless the wonderful powers are proved by wonderful results; but if they are, I advise you to believe in them whether you understand them or not."

Seaweed. "I should like to know how I am to believe what I don't understand."

Bookworm. "Very well, then, don't! and remain an ignorant fool all your life. Of course you can't *really* understand anything but what is within the narrow limits of your own powers; so, if you choose to make those

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powers the limits of your belief, I wish you joy, for you certainly won't be overburdened with knowledge."

Seaweed. "I will retort upon you that it is very easy to be contemptuous to your inferiors, Mr. Bookworm. You would do much better to try and explain to me those wonderful powers themselves, and so remove all the difficulties that stand in the way of my belief."

Bookworm. "If I were to try ever so much, I should not succeed. You can't understand even *my* superiority."

Seaweed. "Oh, Bookworm! now you are growing conceited!"

Bookworm. "Indeed I am not; but you shall judge for yourself. I can do many things you can't do; among others, I can *see*."

Seaweed. "What is that?"

Bookworm. "There, now! I knew I should puzzle you, directly! Why, seeing is something that I do with a very curious machine in my head, called an eye. But as you have

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not got an eye, and therefore cannot see, how am I to make you understand what seeing is?"

Seaweed. "Why, you can tell us, to be sure."

Bookworm. "Tell you what? I can tell you I see. I can say, *Now I see, now I see,* as I walk over you and see the little bits of you that fall under my small eye. Indeed, I can also tell you *what* I see; but how will that teach you what seeing is? You have got no eye, and therefore also you can never know what seeing is."

Zoöphyte. "Then why need we believe there is such a thing as seeing?"

Bookworm. "Oh, pray, don't believe it! I don't know why you should, I am sure! There's no harm at all in being ignorant and narrow-minded. I am sure I had much rather you took no further trouble in the matter; for you are, both of you, very testy and tiresome. It is from nothing but pride and vanity, too, after all. You want to be in a

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higher place in creation than you are put in, and no good ever comes of that. If you'd be content to learn wonderful things in the only way that is open to you, I should have a great deal of pleasure in telling you more."

Zoöphyte. "And pray, what way is that?"

Bookworm. "Why, from the effects produced by them. As I said before, even where you cannot *understand* the wonderful powers themselves, you may have the grace to believe in their existence, from their wonderful results."

Seaweed. "And the results of what you call 'seeing' are——"

"In man," interrupted the Bookworm, "that he gets to know everything about you, and all the creatures, and plants, and stones he looks at; so that he knows your shape, and growth, and colour, and all about the cells of the little creatures that live in you—how many feelers they have, what they live upon, how they catch their food, how the eggs come out of the egg-cells, where you

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live, where you are to be found, what other Zoöphytes are related to you, which are most like you,—in short, the most minute particulars;—so that he puts you into his collections, not among strange creatures, but near to those you are nearest related to; and he describes you, and makes pictures of you, and gives you a name so that you are known for the same creature, wherever you are found, all over the world. And now, I'm quite out of breath with telling you all these wonderful results of seeing."

"But he once took me for a vegetable," mused the Zoöphyte.

"Yes; as I said before, he had not observed quite close enough, nor had he then invented a curious instrument which enables his great big eye to see such little fellows as your inhabitants are. But when he made that instrument, and looked very carefully, he saw all about you."

"Ay, but he still calls me an animal," observed the Seaweed.

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"I know he does, but I am certain he will not do so long! If you are a vegetable, I will warrant him to find it out when he examines you a little more."

"You expect us to believe strange things, Bookworm," observed the Zoöphyte.

"To be sure, because there is no end of strange things for you to believe! And what you can't find out for yourself you must take upon trust from your betters," laughed the Bookworm. "It's the only plan. *Observation and Revelation are the sole means of acquiring knowledge.*"

Just at that moment the door opened, and two gentlemen entered the room.

"Ah, my new specimens on the floor!" observed the Naturalist; "but never mind," added he, as he picked them up, "here is the very one we wanted; it will serve admirably for our purpose. I shall only sacrifice a small branch of it, though."

And the Naturalist cut off a little piece of the Seaweed and laid it in a saucer, and

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poured upon it some liquid from a bottle; and an effervescence began to take place forthwith, and the Seaweed's limy coat began to give way; and the two gentlemen sat watching the result.

"Now," whispered the Bookworm to the Zoöphyte, "those two men are looking closely at your Seaweed friend, and trying what they call experiments, that they may find out what he is; and if they do not succeed, I will give up all my arguments in despair."

But they *did* succeed!

The gentlemen watched on till all the lime was dissolved, and there was nothing left in the saucer but a delicate red branch with little round things upon it that looked like tiny apples.

"This is the fruit, decidedly," remarked the Naturalist; "and now we will proceed to examine it through the microscope."

And they did so.

And an hour or more passed, and a sort of sleepy forgetfulness came over the Bookworm

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and his two friends; for they had waited till they were tired for further remarks from the Naturalist. And, therefore, it was with a start they were aroused at last by hearing him exclaim, "It is impossible to entertain the slightest doubt. If I ever had any, I have none now; and the *corallines* must be removed back once more to their position among vegetables!"

The Naturalist laughed as he loosened the gum from the specimen, which he placed on a fresh paper, and classed among Red Sea-weeds. And soon after, the two gentlemen left the room once more.

"So he has really found our friend out!" cried the Zoöphyte; and he was right about the fruit, too. Oh, Bookworm, Bookworm! would that I could know what *seeing* is!"

"Oh, Zoöphyte, Zoöphyte! I wish you would not waste your time in struggling after the unattainable! You know what *feeling* is. Well, I would tell you that *seeing* is something of the same sort as feeling, only that it is quite different. Will that do?"

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"It sounds like nonsense."

"It *is* nonsense. There *can* be no answer but nonsense, if you want to understand 'really for a fact,' as you call it, powers that are above you. Explain to the rock on which you grow, what *feeling* is!"

"How could I?" said the Zoöphyte? "it has no sensation."

"No more than you have sight," rejoined the Bookworm.

"That is true, indeed," cried the Zoöphyte, "Bookworm! I am satisfied—humbled, I must confess, but satisfied. And now I will rejoice in our position here, glory in our new master, and admire his wonderful powers, even while I cannot understand them."

"I am proud of my disciple," returned the Bookworm, kindly.

"I also am one of them," murmured the Seaweed; "but tell me, now, are there any other strange powers in man?"

"Several," was the Bookworm's answer; "but to be really known they must be pos-

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sessed. A lower power cannot compass the full understanding of a higher. But to limit one's belief to the bounds of one's own small powers, would be to tie one's self down to the foot of a tree, and deny the existence of its upper branches."

"There are no powers beyond those that man possesses, I suppose," mused the Zoöphyte.

"I am far from saying that," replied the Bookworm; "on the contrary——"

But what he would have said further no one knows, for once more the door opened, and the Naturalist, who now returned alone, spent his evening in putting by the specimens in their separate volumes on the shelves. And it was a long, long time before the Bookworm saw them again; for the volumes in which they were kept were bound in Russia leather, to the smell of which he had a particular dislike, so that he never could make his way to them for a friendly chat again.

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VI.

The Light of Truth.

"We know that all things work together for good.—Rom. vii. 28.

"DETESTABLE phantom!" cried the traveller, as his horse sank with him into the morass; "to what a miserable end have you lured me, by your treacherous light!"

"The same old story forever!" muttered the Will-o'-the-Wisp, in reply. "Always throwing blame on others for troubles you have brought upon yourself. What more could have been done for you, unhappy creature, than I have done? All the weary night through have I danced on the edge of this morass, to save you and others from ruin.

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If you have rushed in further and further, like a headstrong fool, in spite of my warning light, who is to blame but yourself?"

"I *am* an unhappy creature, indeed;" rejoined the traveller: "I took your light for a friendly lamp, but have been deceived, to my destruction."

"Yet not by *me*," cried the Will-o'-the-Wisp, anxiously. I work out my appointed business carefully and ceaselessly. My light is ever a friendly lamp to the wise. It misleads none but the headstrong and ignorant."

"Headstrong! ignorant!" exclaimed the Statesman, for such the traveller was. "How little do you know to whom you are speaking! Trusted by my King—honored by my country—the leader of her councils—ah, my country, my poor country! who will take my place and guide you when I am gone?"

"A guide who cannot guide himself! Misjudging, misled, and—though wise, perhaps, in the imperfect laws of society—ignorant in the glorious laws of Nature and of

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Truth—who will miss you, presumptuous being? You have mistaken the light that warned you of danger for the star that was to guide you to safety. Alas for your country, if no better leader than you can be found!"

The Statesman never spoke again, and the Will-o'-the-Wisp danced back to the edge of the black morass; and as he flickered up and down, he mourned his luckless fate—always trying to do good—so often vilified and misjudged. "Yet," said he to himself, as he sent out his beams through the cheerless night, "I will not cease to try; who knows but that I may save *somebody* yet! But what an ignorant world I live in!"

* * * * * *

"Cruel monster!" shrieked the beautiful Girl, in wild despair, as her feet plunged into the swamp, and she struggled in vain to find firmer ground, "you have betrayed me to my death!"

"Ay, ay, I said so! It is always some one else who is to blame, and never your-

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selves, when pretty fools like you deceive themselves. You call me 'monster'—why did you follow a 'monster' into a swamp?" cried the poor Will-o'-the-Wisp, angrily.

"I thought my betrothed had come out to meet me. I mistook your hateful light for his. Oh, cruel fiend, I know you now! Must I die so young, so fair? Must I be torn from life, and happiness, and love? Ay, dance! dance on, in your savage joy."

"Fool as you are, it is no joy to me to see you perish," answered the Will-o'-the-Wisp. "It is my appointed law to warn and save those who will be warned. It is my appointed sorrow, I suppose, that the recklessness and ignorance of such as you, persist in disregarding that law, and turning good into evil. I shone bright and brighter before you as you advanced, entreating you, as it were, to be warned. But, in wilfulness, you pursued me to your ruin. What cruel mother brought you up, and did not teach you to distinguish the steady beam that

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guides to happiness, from the wandering brilliancy that bodes destruction?"

"My poor mother!" wept the Maiden; "what words are these you speak of her? But you, in your savage life, know nothing of what she has done for me, her only child. Mistress of every accomplishment that can adorn and delight society, my lightest word, my very smile, is a law to the world we move in."

"Even so! Accomplished in fleeting and fantastic arts that leave no memorial behind them—unacquainted with the beauty and purposes of the realities around you, which work from age to age in silent mercy for gracious ends, and put to shame the toil that has no aim or end. Oh, that you had but known the law by which I live!"

The Maiden spoke no more, and then she ceased to struggle. The Will-o'-the-Wisp danced back yet another time to the edge of the black morass; "for," said he, 'I may

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save somebody yet. But what a foolish world I live in!"

* * * * *

"The old Squire should mend these here roads," observed Hobbinoll the farmer to his son Colin, as they drove slowly home from market in a crazy old cart, which shook about with such jerks that little Colin tried in vain to keep curled up in a corner. It was hard to say whether the fault was most in the roads,—though they were rather rutty, it must be owned,—or in the stumbling old pony who went from side to side, or in the not very sober driver, who seemed unable at times to distinguish the reins apart, so that he gave sudden pulls, first one way and then the other. But through all these troubles it comforted the Farmer's heart to lay all the blame on the Squire for the bad roads that led across the boggy moor. Colin, however, took but little interest in the matter; but at length, when a more violent jerk than usual threw him almost sprawling on the bottom of

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the cart, he jumped up, laid hold of the side planks, and began to look around him with his half-sleepy eyes, trying to find out where they were. At last he said, "She's coming, father."

"Who's coming?" shouted Hobbinoll.

"T' mother," answered Colin.

"What's she coming for, I wonder," said Hobbinoll; "we've enough in the cart without her."

"But you're going away from her, Father," expostulated Colin, half-crying. "I see her with the lantern, and she'll light us home. You can't see, Father; let me have the reins." But Hobbinoll refused to give up the reins, though he was not very fit to drive. In the struggle, however, he caught sight of the light which Colin took for his mother's lantern.

"And is *that* the fool's errand you'd be going after?" cried he, pointing with his whip to the light. "It's lucky for you, young one, you have not had the driving of us home to-night, though you think you can do any-

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thing, I know. A precious home it would have been, at the bottom of the sludgy pool yonder, for that's where you'd have got us to at last. Yon light is the Will-o'-the-Wisp, that's always trying to mislead folks. Bad luck befal him! I got half-way to him once when I was a young'un, but an old neighbour who'd once been in himself was going by just then, and called me back. He's a villain is that sham-faced Will-o'-the-Wisp."

With these words the Farmer struck the pony so harshly with his heavy whip, twitching the reins convulsively at the same time, at the mere memory of his adventure in the bog, that little Colin was thrown up and down like a ball, and the cart rolled forward in and out of the ruts at such a pace, that Hobbinoll got home to his wife sooner than she ever dared to hope for on market evenings.

"They are safe," observed the Will-o'-the-Wisp, as the cart moved on, "and that is the great point gained! Nevertheless, such wisdom is mere brute experience. In their

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ignorance they would have struck the hand that helped them. Nevertheless, I will try again, for I may yet save some one else. But what a rude and ungrateful world I live in!"

* * * * *

"I see a light at last, papa!" shouted a little Boy on a Shetland pony, as he rode by his Father's side along the moor. "I am so glad! There is either a cottage, or a friendly man with a lantern who will help us to find our way. Let me go after him; I can soon overtake him." And the little Boy touched his pony with a whip, and in another minute would have been cantering along after the light, but that his Father laid a sudden and heavy hand upon the bridle.

"Not a step further in *that* direction, at any rate, if you please, my darling."

"Oh, Papa!" expostulated the child, pointing with his hand to the light.

And, "Oh, my son, I see!" cried the Father, smiling; "and well is it for you that I not only see, but know the meaning of what I see

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at the same time. That light is neither the gleam from a cottage, nor yet a friendly man with a lantern, as you think, though, for the matter of that, the light is friendly enough to those who understand it. It shines there to warn us from the dangerous part of the bog. Kind old Will-o'-the-Wisp! pursued the Father, raising his voice, as if calling through the darkness into the distance—"Kind old Will-o'-the-Wisp, we know what you mean; we will not come near your deadly swamps. The old Naturalist knows you well—good night, and thank you for the warning." So saying, the Naturalist turned the reins of his son's pony the other way, and they both trotted along, keeping the beaten road as well as they could by the imperfect light.

"After all, it was more like a lantern than those pictures of the nasty Will-o'-the-Wisp, Papa," murmured the little Boy, reluctantly urging his pony on.

"Our friend is not much indebted to you for the pretty name you have called him,"

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laughed the Father. "You are of the same mind as the poet, who, with the licence of his craft, said—

'Yonder phantom only flies
To lure thee to thy doom.'"

"Yes, Papa, and so he does," interposed the Boy.

"But, indeed, he does no such thing, my dear,—on the contrary, he spends all his life in shining brightly to warn travellers of the most dangerous parts of the swamp."

"But the shining seems as if he was inviting them to go after him, Papa."

"Only because you choose to think so, my dear, and do not inquire. Does the sailor think the shining of the lighthouse invites him to approach the dangerous rocks on which it is built?"

"Oh, no, Papa, because he knows it is put there on purpose to warn him away."

"He only knows by teaching and inquiry, Arthur; and so you, also, by teaching and in-

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quiry, will learn to know that this Will-o'-the-Wisp is made to shine for us in swamps and marshes as a land-beacon of danger. The laws of Nature, which are the acted will of God, work together in this case, as in all others, for a good end. And it is given to us as both a privilege and a pleasure to search them out and to avail ourselves of the mercies, whilst we admire the wonders of the great Creator. Can you think of a better employment?"

The fire was very bright, and the tea was warm and good, that greeted the travellers, Father and Son, on their arrival at home that night. Many a joke, too, passed with Mamma as to the sort of tea they should have tasted, and the kind of bed they should have lain down in, had they only gone after the Will-o'-the-Wisp, as young Arthur had so much wished to do.

And for just a few days after these events —not more, for children's wisdom seldom does, or ought to, last much longer—Arthur

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had every now and then a wise and philosophical fit, and on the principle that, however much appearances might be to the contrary, the laws of Nature were always working to some good and beneficent end, he sagely and gravely reproved his little sister for crying when a shower of hailstones fell; "for surely," said he, "though we cannot go out to-day, the storm is doing good to something or somebody, somewhere."

It was a blessed creed! though it cost him a struggle to adhere to it when the lightning flashed round him, and the thunder roared in the distance, and he saw from the windows dark clouds hanging over the landscape. When some one said the storm had been very grand, he thought—yes, but it was grander still to think that all these laws of Nature, as they are called,—this acted will of God,—was forever working, night and day, in darkness and in light, recognised or unheeded, for some wise and beneficent end.

Yes! when he was older he would try and trace out these ends—a better employment

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could not be found. And it may be, that in long after years, when the storms and the clouds that gathered round him were harder yet to look through, because they were mental troubles; it may be, that then, from amidst the tender recollections of his infancy, the gleaming of the Will-o'-the-Wisp would suddenly rise and shine before him with comfort. For the Student of Nature who had traced so many blessed ends out of dark and mysterious beginnings, held fast to the humility and faith of childhood; and where his mind was unable to penetrate, his heart was contented to believe. * * *

Meanwhile the Will-o'-the-Wisp had heard the kind good-night that greeted him as the travellers passed by on that dark evening. And his light shone brighter than ever, as he said, "I am happy, now. I have saved the life of one who not only is thankful for it, but knows the hand that saved him." With these words he cheerily danced back again to his appointed post.

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VII.

Waiting.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait."
LAM. iii. 26.

IT was, doubtless, a very sorry life the House Cricket led, before houses were built and fires were kindled. There was no comfortable kitchen hearth, then, in the warm nooks and corners of which he might sit and sing his cheerful song, coming out every now and then to bask himself in the glow of the blazing light. On the contrary, he, so fond of heat, had no place to shelter in but holes in hollow trees, or crevices in rocks and stones, or some equally dull and damp abode. Besides which, he had to bear the incessant taunts

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and ridicule of creatures who were perfectly comfortable themselves, and so had no fellow-feeling for his want of cheerfulness.

"Why don't you go and spring about, and sing in the fields with your cousin, the Grasshopper?" was the ill-natured question of the Spider, as she twisted her web in one of the refuge-holes the Cricket had crept into; "I am sure your legs are long enough, if you would only take the trouble to undouble them. It's nothing but a sulky, discontented feeling that keeps you and all your family moping in these out-of-the-way corners, when you ought to be using your limbs in jumping about and enjoying yourself. And I dare say, too, that you could sing a great deal louder if you chose."

The Cricket thought, perhaps he could,—but he must feel very differently to what he did then, before it would be possible to try. Something was so very, very wrong with him, but what that something was he did not know. All the other beasts and birds and

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insects seemed easy and happy enough. The Spider, for instance, was quite at home and gay in the hole *he* found so dismal. And it was not the Spider only who was contented: the Flies—the Bees—the Ants—the very Mole, who sometimes came up from burrowing, and told wonderful stories of his underground delights—the Birds, with their merry songs—the huge Beasts, who walked about like giants in the fields—all—all were satisfied with their condition, and happy in themselves. Every one had the home he liked, and no one envied the other.

But with him it was quite otherwise; he never felt at home! on the contrary, it always seemed to him that he was looking out for something that was not there—some place that could never be found—some state where he could rise out of the depression and uneasiness which here seemed to clog him down, though he could not understand why. Poor fellow! as things were now, he felt forever driven to hide in holes, although he knew

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that his limbs were built for energy ; and few ever heard his voice, though he possessed one fitted for something much better than doleful complaints.

Sometimes a set of House Crickets would meet, and talk the matter over. They looked at their long, folded-up legs, and could not but see how exactly they were like those of the Grasshopper. And yet the idea of following the Grasshopper into the cool grass, and jumping about all day, was odious to them. Once, indeed, a Cricket of great self-denial offered to go into the fields and find one of his green cousins, and ask his opinion on the subject, and whether he could give any reason why the grasshopper life should be so distasteful to such near relations. And he actually went ; and when the Grasshopper could be persuaded to stand quiet for a few seconds, and listen, he was so much concerned for the Crickets (for he had a tender heart, from living so much in the grass, and being so musical), that he said he would himself

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visit his cousins, and see what could be done for them. Perhaps it was some little accidental ailment, or it might be a chronic affection in the family, owing to mismanagement when they were young, but which a little judicious treatment would correct.

With these views he started for the hollow tree in which the Crickets had taken shelter, and soon reached it,—for he travelled the whole way in bounds. And the last bound took him fairly into the midst of the family circle, in which indeed he alighted with more vivacity than politeness, for his cousins did not like such startling gaiety. However, he steadied himself carefully, and then began to examine the legs and knees of all the Crickets assembled. He drew them out, and looked them well over; for, thought he, "there is perhaps some blunder or flaw in the way the joints are put together." But he could find nothing amiss. There sat the Crickets, with legs and bodies as nicely made as his own, only with no energy for exertion.

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What he might have thought, or what he might have said, after this puzzling discovery, no one can tell; for at the end of his examination he was seized with the fidgets, and, "Excuse me, my dear friends," cried he; "I have the cramp in my left leg—I *must* jump!" And jump he did—once, twice, thrice—and the last jump carried him out of the tree; and either on purpose, or from forgetfulness, he sprang singing away, and returned to his cousins the Crickets no more.

Oh, this yearning after some other better state that lies unrevealed in the indefinite future—how restless and disheartening a sensation! Oh, this painful contrast of perfection in all created things around, to the lonely meditator on so much happiness, who is the solitary exception to the rule—how trying the position! How cruel, how almost overwhelming the struggle between the iron chain of reality and the soaring wing of aspiration!

But, "What is the use, my poor good

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friends," expostulated a plodding old Mole, one day, after coming out to see how the upper world went on, and hearing the Cricket's complaints—"what is the use of all this groaning and conjecturing? You admit that every other creature but yourself is perfect in its way, and quite happy. Well, then, I will tell you that you ought to be quite sure you are perfect in your way, too, though you have not found it out yet; and that you will be happy one day or other, although it may not be the case just now. Do you suppose this fine scheme of things we live in is to be soiled with one speck of dirt, as it were for the sake of teasing such a little insignificant creature as yourself? Don't think it for a moment, for it is not at all likely! But you must not suppose that everything goes right at first, even with the best of us. I have had some small experience, and I know. But everything fits in at last. Of that I am quite sure. For instance, now, I do not suppose it ever occurred to you to

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think what a trial it must be to a young Mole when he first begins to burrow in the earth. Do you imagine that he knows what he is doing it for, or what will be the result? No such thing. It is a complete working in the dark, not knowing in the least where he is going. Dear me! if one had once stopped to conjecture and puzzle, what a hardship it would have seemed to drive one's nose by the hour together into unknown ground, for some unexplained reason that did not come out for some time afterwards, and that one had no certainty would ever come out at all! But everything fits in at last. And so it did with us. I remember it quite well in my own case. We drove the earth away and outwards, till the space so cleared proved an absolute palace!—By-the-by, I must try and get you down into our splendid abode—it will cheer you up, and teach you a useful lesson.—Well, so you see we found out at last what all the grubbing had been for——"

"Ah! but," interrupted the Cricket, "you

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were labouring for *some* purpose all the time, and if I had to labour I could hope. The difficulty is, to sit moping, with nothing to do but *wait.*"

"It is nonsense to talk of nothing to do," answered the Mole; "every creature has *something* to do You, for instance, have always to watch for the sun. You know you like the beams and warmth he sends out better than anything else in the world,—so you should get into the way of them as much as you can. And after the sun has set, you must hunt up the snuggest holes you can find, and so make the best of things as they are; and for the rest, you must *wait.* And waiting answers sometimes as well as working, I can assure you. There was the young Ox in the plains near here. As soon as he could run about at all, he began driving his clumsy head against everything he met.* No one

*"The bull-calf butts with smooth and unarmed brow, ... and no pre-assurance common to a whole species does in any instance prove delusive."—Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*

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could tell why; but he fidgeted and butted about all day long, and many of his friends and acquaintance were very much offended by his manners. Others laughed. The dogs, indeed, were particularly amused, and used to bark at him constantly—even close to his nose, sometimes, as he lowered his head after them. Well, at last out came the secret. Two fine horns grew out from our friend's head, and people soon understood the meaning of all the butting; and one of the saucy curs who was playing the old barking game with him one day, got finely tossed for his pains. Everything fits in at last, my friends! No cravings are given in vain. There is always something in store to account for them, you may be quite sure. You *may* have to wait a bit—some of you a shorter, some a longer time; but *do* wait—and everything will fit in and be perfect at last."

It was a most fortunate circumstance for the Crickets that the Mole happened to give them this good advice; for a malicious Ape

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had lately been suggesting to them, whether, as they were totally useless and very unhappy, it would not be a good thing for them all to starve themselves to death, or in some other way to rid the world of their whole race. But the Mole's good sense gave a different turn to their ideas; and hope is so natural and pleasant a feeling, that when once they ventured to encourage it, it flourished and grew in their hearts till it created a sort of happiness of itself. In short, they determined to *wait*, and meantime to watch for the sun, as their friend had advised.

There are not many records of the early history of the House Crickets; but it is supposed that they travelled about a good deal—preferring always the hottest countries; and rumours of a few straggling families who had discovered a sort of Cricket Elysium at the mouth of volcanoes, were afloat at one time. But the truth of the report was never ascertained: and as, doubtless, if ever they got there they were sure to be swept away

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to destruction by the first eruption that took place, it is no wonder that the fact has never been thoroughly established.

Meanwhile, several generations died off; and things remained much as they were. But the words of the Mole were carried down from father to son, and became a by-word of comfort among them :—"Everything would fit in at last! no cravings are given in vain. There is always something in store to account for them. *Wait*—and everything will fit in, and be perfect at last."

Gleams of hope, indeed, were not wanting to our poor little friends, during this time of probation. Wherever fires were kindled by human hands, whether by wanderers in the depths of forests, or sojourners in tents, a stir of excitement and rapturous expectation was caused among such Crickets as were near enough to know and enjoy the circumstance. But, alas! when the travellers journeyed onwards, or the tents were removed

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elsewhere, the disappointment that ensued was bitter in proportion.

Many an evil hint, too, had they on such occasions from the mischief-making creatures which are to be found in all grades of life, that such, and no better, would be their fate forever. Rays of joy, beaming only to be extinguished in cruel mockery of their feelings —such was to be their perpetual portion!

"But we *will* not believe it," cried the Crickets, heart-broken as they were. "Everything will be perfect at last," sang they as loudly as they could. "No cravings are given in vain." And as they always sang this same song, the mischief-makers got tired of listening at last, and left them to sing and weep alone. Ah! it required no small strength of mind to resist, as they did, such plausible insinuations, supported as they were by present appearances.

But, truly, though it tarried, the day of deliverance and joy did come! The first fire that ever warmed the hearthstone that flagged

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the grand old chimney arch of ancient times, ended for ever the mystery of the House Crickets' wants and cravings; and when it commonly blazed every winter night in men's dwellings, all the doubts and woes of Cricket life were over. These seemed to have passed away like the dreams of a disturbed night, which had been succeeded by daylight and reality. And oh, what ecstasy of joy the Crickets felt! How loud they shouted, and how high they sprang! "We knew it would be so! The good old Mole was right! The grumbling beasts were wrong! Everything is perfect now, and no one is so happy as we are."

"Grandmother, what creature is it that I hear singing so loudly in the corner by the fire?" inquires the little one of the good old dame who sits musing on the oaken settle.

"I do not hear it, my child, and I do not know," answers the deaf and blind old crone. "But if it be singing, love, it is happy, and enjoys these blessed fires as much as I do.

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'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.'"

Ah! it was no wonder that amidst the many merry voices that then shouted, and still shout, round those warm and friendly fires, no voice is louder, no joy more grateful, than that of the patient Cricket. He has "waited" through fear and shadows—has hoped through darkness and ignorance—and his abode now glows with warmth and light. And, if he received a lesson of wisdom from a creature more humble and seemingly more blind than himself, it is at least not the only instance in which instruction has been so obtained.

And now we know the reason why the Crickets come by troops into our houses, and live and thrive about our cheering fires, and sing so loud and long that the housewives sometimes (I grieve to say) get weary of the noise, and try to lessen the number of their lively visitors. But yet there is a strange, old notion of good fortune attending the

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presence of these little chirping creatures. They are welcomed as bringing "good luck" to the family about whose hearth they settle. And so they do! They bring with them a tale of promises made good. They sing a song of hope fulfilled; and though in that glad music there be neither speech nor language which we can recognize as such, there is yet a voice to be heard among them by all who love to listen, with reverent delight, to the sweet harmonies and deep analogies of nature.

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VIII.

A Lesson of Hope.

"Oh, yet we trust that, somehow, good
Will be the final goal of ill!"
From TENNYSON'S "*In Memoriam.*"

"HOW the rising blast is driving through the ancient forest! What a dismal roaring there is among the pine-trees! What a sharp clattering among the half-dried poplar-leaves! What a sighing among the beeches! A wild, mysterious hour, and full of strange, fantastic types of mortal life!"

It was thus I spoke, when, having wandered out one gloomy autumn night to muse on Nature and her laws, I found myself contemplating, in the deep recesses of a wood

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the progress of a violent storm. And as I paused, I leant back, in sad reflections lost, against an oak, and, looking upwards to the sky, tried to gaze into the depths of those black vapoury masses that had arisen, one knew not how or whence, to darken over the expanse of heaven, when all at once there shone down upon me, from an opening in the clouds, the full rays of a bright October moon.

The light was sudden, and a sudden revulsion took place within my heart. I had been thinking that, like the cruel storm, and like the heavy clouds, were the troubles and the trials of human existence; and now, when that sweet radiance broke upon my eyes, I heard a voice exclaim, as if in echo to my thoughts—"It is the moon that shone in Paradise!" It was the Bird of Night, quite near me, in the hollow of a tree. Looking to see from whence the sound had come, I met his large, grave, meditative eyes fixed on my moonlit face, and then I heard the voice

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exclaim again—"The moon that shone in Paradise!"

Oh, what a thought to come across the tumult of that hour! *The moon that shone in Paradise!*—up to whose radiant orb the eyes of countless generations have been turned—from the first glance of spotless innocence to the last yearning gaze of sorrow-stricken manhood! And why?—but that in that calm, unchanging glory there shines forth a promise of eternal, everlasting peace. But now another voice was heard, despite the howling of the storm. It was a croaking Raven, swinging on a branch beside me. He came between me and the light, and ever and anon his coal-black wings seemed spreading for a flight.

"Deluded fool," he muttered, "with your endless myths! This comes of living in the dark all day, and spending all your time in guess-work! See! your precious moon is gone!"

"Not gone, though hidden," was the answer.

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But I heard no more than this, for here the frightful wind grew louder still. He roared in fury all around, scattering the last leaves from the bending trees, as if he hated the very relics of the gentle summer. And many bowed their heads, and others moaned in grief.

"Hast thou come with mighty news from distant lands," shouted the Pine-tree, scornfully, as he tossed his branches to the storm, "that thou bringest such confusion in thy path? Ambassador of evil! who has sent thee here?"

"Cannot yonder moon teach thee milder thoughts?" cried the Elm-tree, as he stood, majestic in his sorrow and despair.

"Our hour is come," exclaimed the softer Beech. "My leaves lie scattered all around. Our life is closing fast. Naked and forlorn we stand, amid the ruins of the past."

"What mockery of existence," stormed the black-leaved Poplar, in his wrath, "to be placed here, and clothed in such sweet beauty,

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nurtured by gentle dews and tender sunshine, and then be left at last the victims of reckless fury, with all our glories torn by force away! Would I had never risen from the ground!"

"Oh, my aspiring friend," the ill-mouthed Raven cried, "the few months' splendour does not satisfy your heart! You aim too high, methinks. Well, well! aspiring thoughts are very fine; but were I you I would accommodate myself to facts. A short spring, a shorter summer, and then to perish. Ha! here you are again, my ancient, worthy friend?"

And then another gust broke in with savage fury on the forest, and many a stalwart branch crashed down upon the ground. The wailings of afflicted nature rose amidst the storm.

"Is there no refuge from this end?" inquired the Oak. "Why have I lived at all?"

"Because destruction is the law of life," the Raven uttered, with his fiercest croak

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"Where would destruction be, were there no life to be destroyed? It is a glorious law."

"No law, but only an exception," cried the Bird of Night.

And as he spoke there streamed once more from out the clouds that type of peace that passeth not away—the moon that shone in Paradise. Oh, what a silver mantle she let fall upon the disrobed branches of those trees! Wet as they were with rain-drops, and waving in the gale, it seemed as if they shone in robes of starlight glory. What gracious promises seemed streaming down with that sweet light!

"Lift up your heads, ye forest trees, once more;" so sang the mild-eyed Bird of Night. "Fury is short-lived—love alone enduring. All that destroys is transitory, but order is everlasting. The unbridled powers of cruelty may rage—it is but for a time! And ye may darken over the blue heavens, ye vapoury masses in the sky. It matters not! Beyond the howling of that wrath, beyond the black-

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ness of those clouds, there shines, unaltered and serene, the moon that shone in Paradise."

"Your myth again, detested Bird of Night! Here, to the rescue, ancient friend!"

And louder then than ever came that cruel, cruel wind.

"It matters not," once more the Owl exclaimed. "The stormy winds must cease, the clouds must pass away, and yonder sails the light that tells of harmony restored."

"Infatuated fool, to live on hope, with death around you and before you!" groaned the Raven—and then a crash like thunder rent the air. The Oak had fallen to the ground. I started at the shock.

"Will the day ever come," I cried aloud, as if addressing some mysterious friend, "will the day ever come when storms and woe shall cease? Order and peace seem meant, but death and ruin come to pass."

"Oh, miserable doubter, do you ask? Must the brute beasts and mute creation rise to give an answer to your fears? Look in the

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heaven above, and in the earth below, and in the water deep beneath the earth. One only law is given—the law of order, harmony and joy."

"Alas, how often broken," I exclaimed.

"Ay, but disturbance is no law, and therefore cannot last. Disorder, death, destruction: by their own nature they are transitory; rebellious powers that struggle for a time, and frustrate here and there the gracious purposes ordained. But they exist not of themselves; have neither law nor being of themselves; exist as but disturbers of a scheme whose deep foundations cannot be overthrown. Life, order, harmony and peace; means duly fitting ends; the object, universal joy. This is the law. Believe in it, and live!"

And as the voice grew silent, from the sky beamed over all the scene the placid moon once more. The wind had lulled, or passed away to other regions of the earth, and over all the forest streamed the brilliant light.

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Once more the lit-up trees shone spangled o'er with rays; and happy murmurs broke upon my ear, instead of loud complaints.

"We have been wild and foolish, gracious Moon!" exclaimed the tender Beech. "We doubted all the promises and hopes you shed so freely down. In pity to the terrors of the night, forgive us once again!"

"You have said right, my sister," said the Oak. "That heavenly power, whom neither winds nor storms can reach, will view with tenderness our troubled lot, who live amid the tempests of the earth. She will forgive, she hath forgiven us all. Hath she not clothed us now with robes more brilliant than the summer ones we love?"

"The robes of hope and promise," wept the Poplar, as he spoke; for all his branches trembled with delight, and stars seemed dropping all around.

"I mourn my dark despair,' bewailed the Elm. I should have called the past to memory! We never are deserted in our need.

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The winter tempests rage, and terrible they are; but always the bright moon from time to time returns, to shed down rays of hope and promises of glory on our heads; and still we doubt and fear, and still the patient moon repeats her tale. And then the spring and summer time return, and life, and joy, and all our beauteous robes. Oh, what weak tremblers we must be!"

And so, through all the rest of that strange night, murmurs of comfort sounded through the wood, and I returned at last to the poor, lonely cottage that I called my home, and wept mixed tears of sorrow and of joy. Father and mother lost, swept suddenly away, and I, with straitened means, left alone to struggle through the world! Did I not stand before my desolate hearth, like one awakened from a dream, a vision—(surely, such it was!)—exclaiming in despair, as did the weeping Beech, "Naked and forlorn I stand, amid the ruins of the past." But through the casement glided in on me, me

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also, as I stood, the blessed rays of that eternal moon—the moon that shone in Paradise—the moon that promises a Paradise restored.

And ever and anon, throughout the struggle of my life, I would return for wisdom and for hope to the old forest where I dreamt the dream. As time passed no, and winter snows came down, a cold unmeaning sleep seemed to bind up the trees—but still, at her appointed time, the moon came out, and lit up even snow with robes of light and hope. And then the spring-time burst the cruel bonds that held all nature in a stagnant state. Verdure and beauty came again; and, as I listened to the gales that breathed soft music through the trees, I thought, "If I could dream again, I should hear songs of exquisite delight." But that was not to be. Still, I could revel in the comfort of the sight, and watch the moonbeams glittering in triumphant joy through the now verdant bowers of those woods, playing in happy sport amid the shadows of the leaves.

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And to me also came a spring! From me, passed away the winter and its chill! And now I take the children of my love, and the sweet mother who has borne them, to those woods; and ever and anon we tell long tales of Nature and her ways, and how the poor trees moan, when storms and tempests come; and how the wise Owl talks to heedless ears his deep philosophy of laws of order that must one day certainly prevail, and how the patient moon is never weary of her task of shedding rays of hope and promise on the world; and even while we speak, the children clap their hands for joy, and say they never will despair for anything that comes, for, lo! above their heads there suddenly shines out—THE MOON THAT SHONE IN PARADISE!

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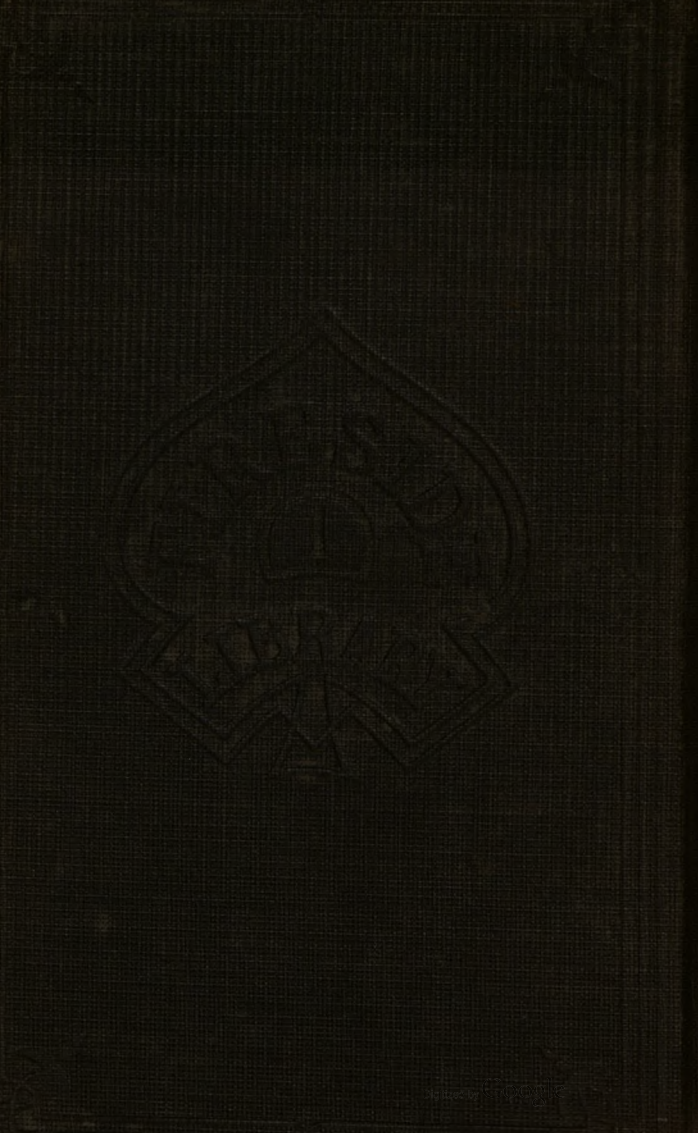
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